

SCS #1331

Thomas F. Torrey

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ON

THE ATONEMENT.



THE CROSS OF CHRIST; THE CALL OF GOD; SAVING FAITH :

AN INQUIRY

INTO

THE COMPLETENESS AND EXTENT

OF

THE ATONEMENT,

WITH ESPECIAL REFERENCE TO

THE UNIVERSAL OFFER OF THE GOSPEL, AND THE
UNIVERSAL OBLIGATION TO BELIEVE.

BY

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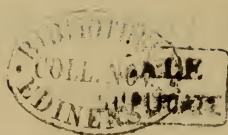
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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE circumstances in which this publication originated, as stated in the beginning of the work, will explain any apparent want of order in the treatment of the subject, especially in the first two or three Chapters, which were written without any view to a full and systematic discussion of it. Had time permitted, I might have remodelled the whole, so as to give it greater compactness and completeness; and I might have embodied all I had to say in the work itself, without having recourse to an Appendix of addenda. As it is, I have endeavoured to correct, and I have somewhat enlarged, my hastily prepared contributions to the Magazine; and, with the Preliminary Dissertation and explanatory Notes, I would fain hope that, by the blessing of God, this treatise may be instrumental in aiding some who may desire to study this branch of theology, by directing the course of their inquiries, and laying down a few soundings and landmarks—the rather, as I have sought to avoid the perplexities of recent and personal controversies.

EDINBURGH, *May* 22, 1845.

N.B.—In revising this work for a second edition, I have to apologise for instances of carelessness in the first, which are to be accounted for by reference to the pressure of business which the meeting of Assembly implies. Even now, I have not been able to correct it as I would wish to do; and there are many points which I would desire to illustrate more fully; but my object, in these lines, is to express a wish, that if any use is to be made of this treatise, the present impression may be preferred to the former.

EDINBURGH, *June* 21, 1845.

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PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION.

IN the introductory remarks which we have to offer, we shall take the opportunity of adverting to what might seem to some to be a more directly scriptural method of conducting the argument respecting the work of Christ—its nature and extent—than that which, in writing these papers, we were led to adopt.

The reason which we had for discussing the subject in the manner we have done, is briefly stated in the letter that accompanied our third communication.* The truth is, it does not seem that much is gained by a mere array, on either side, of texts and passages—the interpretation of which must, after all, turn on certain general principles, derived from Scripture, respecting the sovereignty of God, and the character of Christ's work, and of the Spirit's. For it is a great mistake to imagine that to treat a subject scripturally, means merely to string together a concordance of quotations; or that the mind of the Spirit is to be ascertained by a mere enumeration of some of his sayings. His meaning is to be known, like the meaning of any

* See page 37.

other author—especially if that author be a voluminous writer, and one of vast compass and variety, having many different styles, suited to all different occasions, and personating many different characters, real or imaginary, whom he makes the vehicles for conveying his sentiments—not always by particular isolated expressions, so much as by an intelligent study of his general train of thought, and the scope and tenor of his reasoning on the more comprehensive and larger topics which, from time to time, fill and occupy his soul. This seems to be what judicious divines mean when they speak of the “analogy of the faith,” as a rule or canon of scriptural interpretation. At the same time, we frankly admit the danger of excess or error in the application of this rule—as it may lead to a habit of presumptuous and dogmatical theorizing, on the one hand, together with a loose and careless exegesis, or examination of texts, on the other; and we at once consent to the appeal being uniformly made, in the last resort, to particular passages, as the legitimate tests or touchstones by which all general views are to be tried. Let us consider, then, some of the portions of Scripture usually brought forward in connection with this subject of the extent of the atonement, or the question between particular and general redemption; and, for the sake of convenience, let us distribute them as they seem, at first sight, to range themselves, and as they are generally made to do service, on the opposite sides of this controversy.

There are a number of texts which seem to assert

the universality of the redemption purchased by Christ. These are chiefly such as the following: 1 John ii. 2; 2 Cor. v. 14; Rom. v. 18; Heb. ii. 9; and others of similar import.

Now, in regard to this series of texts, in the mass, we may, in the first place, avail ourselves generally of the judicious observations of Professor Moses Stuart, who, as the closing sentence of the very paragraph we are about to quote sufficiently proves, can scarcely be suspected of any undue leaning to the strict Calvinistic doctrine. We refer to the passage for the sake of the general principle it contains: as to the particular text in question, we shall presently give our view of the interpretation which seems to exhaust its meaning more fully than that suggested by this eminent commentator. In his Commentary on Heb. ii. 9, he thus writes:—"Ἰπὲρ πάντας means, *all men without distinction—i.e.*, both Jew and Gentile. The same view is often given of the death of Christ. (See John iii. 14–17, iv. 42, xii. 32; 1 John ii. 2, iv. 14; 1 Tim. ii. 3, 4; Tit. ii. 11; 2 Pet. iii. 7. Compare Rom. iii. 29, 30, x. 11–13.) In all these, and the like cases, the words *all*, and *all men*, evidently mean Jew and Gentile. They are opposed to the Jewish idea, that the Messiah was connected appropriately and exclusively with the Jews, and that the blessings of the kingdom were appropriately, if not exclusively, theirs. The sacred writers mean to declare, by such expressions, that Christ died really and truly as well, and as much, for the Gentiles as for the Jews; that there is no difference at all in regard to the privileges of any

one who may belong to his kingdom; and that all men, without exception, have equal* and free access to it. But the considerate interpreter, who understands the nature of this idiom, will never think of seeking, in expressions of this kind, proof of the final salvation of *every individual* of the human race. Nor do they, when strictly scanned by the *usus loquendi* of the New Testament, decide directly against the views of those who advocate what is called a *particular redemption*. The question, in all these phrases, evidently respects the *offer* of salvation, the opportunity to acquire it through a Redeemer; not the actual application of promises, the fulfilment of which is connected only with repentance and faith. But whether such an offer can be made with sincerity to those who are reprobates (and whom the Saviour knows are and will be such), consistently with the grounds which the advocates for particular redemption maintain, is a question for the theologian, rather than the the commentator, to discuss."

With this high authority we might be satisfied; and when, in the face of it, we find men still reiterating these particular texts, as if the mere sound of the words was to be conclusive, and they had nothing to do but to accumulate "alls" and "everys," taken indiscriminately out of the Bible, very much as children heap up at random a pile of loose stones, without regard to context, or connection, or analogy (the *usus loquendi* of the New Testament, as Professor Stuart calls it), we might content ourselves with this testimony of an adversary, as proving, at the very least,

that they cannot make such short work of this argument as they suppose.

But, for sake of further illustration, we may take up one or two of these passages separately. In doing so, we must ask, in each case, what is the precise point under discussion; for it is a good general rule, well known, though, alas! not so well observed, among controversialists, that a writer's authority, in any given passage, does not extend beyond the particular topic which he has on hand. You may appeal to him as giving a deliverance on the matter before him, but not as deciding another question which may not, at the time, have been in his mind at all. Nothing can be fairer, or more necessary, than this maxim. An earnest and simple-minded man offers his opinion frankly on what is submitted to him, without being careful always to guard and fence himself round on every side, lest, perchance, some incidental phrase he may happen to let fall, in the warmth and energy of his feeling, on a subject, perhaps, in which he takes a deep interest, should be laid hold of and brought up as the expression of his deliberate judgment on some collateral topic which, all the while, may have been miles away from his thoughts. He relies on your intelligence and honesty—on your good sense and your good faith; if he did not—if he felt himself bound to be ever qualifying and defining his terms, lest what he gives you as his mind on one point should be used by you as authority on another—all the freedom and fairness, the generosity and cordiality of friendship, would be at an end; and stiff and strait-laced ceremony would rule

the day. This remark pre-eminently applies to the style and manner of Holy Scripture; for there is no one feature of the Spirit's communications to us more signally conspicuous than this, that He always gives himself to one thing at a time. Using as his instruments, earnest and simple-minded men, who speak as they are moved by Him, the Holy Ghost, identifying himself with each, in turn of thought and style of writing, and entering into the very mind of the individual whom he inspires, gives forth, through him, a frank and full utterance on each subject as he takes it up, with the same unstudied ease and unsuspecting freedom—often even with the same impetuous rapidity of involved grammar and abrupt rhetoric—with which the writer himself, if left alone, would have poured out his whole soul. Hence the ease with which anomalies and inconsistencies may be raked together, for the use, or abuse, of minute critics who have no mind, and subtle cavillers who have no heart, to understand what the Spirit says, through honest men, to their fellow-men. But Wisdom is justified of her children; and he that hath ears, let him hear.

1. Take, as an instance, Rom. v. 18, and 2 Cor. v. 14. In the first of these passages, the sole object of the apostle is to explain, or assert, the principle of imputation—the principle upon which God deals with many as represented by one, or with one as representing many. For this end, he draws a parallel between the imputation of Adam's sin and that of Christ's righteousness. Evidently, however, the whole value of the comparison turns upon the nature of the transac-

tion on either side, not upon its extent. The identity, or agreement, or correspondence, intended to be pointed out, is an identity in respect of principle. To stretch the language used, so as to make it decide the question of extent, is to represent the apostle as inconsistent with himself in the very matter which he is formally and expressly discussing. For what is the principle of imputation, as he lays it down? It implies these two things: *first*, That a vicarious headship be constituted in one person; and, *secondly*, That the whole result or consequence of the trial upon which that one person is placed, whether it be success or failure, be actually and in fact communicated and conveyed to all whom he represents. Of this last condition, he is most careful to prove, that it was realized in the imputation of Adam's sin, and for this purpose he insists very specially on the universality of death: "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come." (Ver. 14.) But it is a condition which, if insisted on at the other side of the antithesis—and without it the parallel wholly fails, and the doctrine of imputation is gone—is positively irreconcilable with the notion of a general or universal redemption, excepting upon the hypothesis of universal salvation. For it is of the very essence of the principle of imputation, according to this parallel, that precisely in the same manner in which Adam's sin, with the death which it entailed, did, in point of fact, as well as in law, pass from him to those who were represented by him, and

identified with him; so, the righteousness of Christ, with the life and salvation which it involves, must be really and actually, in its consequences as well as in its merit, made over to all the parties interested. Hence, if the parallel is pressed, in regard to the extent as well as the nature of the two transactions, life and salvation must actually be as universal as death. Thus, if this text be unwisely pressed beyond the present purpose of the writer, contrary to the rule of sound criticism and sound sense, it is really not the limitation of Christ's work to his people that will come to be called in question, but the fact of the final condemnation of any of the wicked.

An observation nearly similar might be made in reference to 2 Cor. v. 14. There the apostle's theme is the union and identification of believers with Christ in his death and in his life. His object is, to remind them that as Christ's death has become theirs, so also has his life. Hence it is to his purpose to argue thus: "If one died for all, then all were or became dead," or literally, "died" also, in and with him; and "He died, that the living might not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." He thus brings out the principle of imputation, that whatever befalls the Head must be held to pass, and must actually pass, efficaciously, to all whom he represents; and he connects with it the principle of vital union, that all thus represented are partakers in all things, in his death and in his life, with the Head. The whole argument in the context depends on these two principles. The question of the extent of the

atonement is not once before the writer throughout the whole of this fervid practical appeal, in which he is enforcing the high standard of spiritual privilege and duty. The bearing of Christ's death on the unregenerate is not within the scope of his reasoning; and to regard him as giving a deliverance on that point, instead of urging home its bearing upon believers, is to introduce an element altogether heterogeneous, and, in fact, not only to perplex the argument, but to make it, as in the former case, tell rather in favour of universal salvation.

Again, 2. In such texts as 1 Tim. ii. 6, Tit. ii. 11, 1 John ii. 2, the universality asserted is plainly a universality of classes, conditions, and characters of men, not of individuals.

Thus, in the first (1 Tim. ii. 1-6), the apostle is exhorting that prayer be made for all men, kings, and rulers, as well as subjects (a necessary specification at a time when those in authority, being too often oppressors, might seem to have little claim on Christians for this kindness); he would have intercession offered for men of all ranks and all circumstances in the world; and it is to enforce this universality of intercessory prayer, in opposition to the idea of excluding or omitting any set of men, even the most undeserving, that he introduces as an argument, *first*, The universality of the Father's love, who has no respect of persons, but would have all men to be saved; and, *secondly*, The universality of the Son's mediation, which has regard to men, as such, without excepting any portion of the race; for he "gave himself a ran-

som for all, to be testified in due time." In the second, also (Tit. ii. 1-11), admitting the marginal reading to be preferable—"The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared"—the design of the apostle is to gather and collect together, in one company, those whom he has been distributing into detachments, according to age, sex, office, and station. Aged men; aged women; young women; young men; Titus, the pastor; servants; these he has been severally directing as to their several duties: and having adverted to the things wherein they are separated from one another, he closes with an appeal to that wherein they agree; for, though their relations in life, with their corresponding trials and obligations, are diversified, their position, as believers, is one, and the motive to obedience is one and the same—"the appearing of that grace of God which bringeth salvation to all men"—however in age, sex, office, or station, they may differ—and which teaches and binds them all alike to a sober, righteous, and godly life, in the hope of the glorious appearing of Him whose saving grace has appeared already. Such is the argument: the very force of which, as being an appeal to the place, or middle stage, which believers occupy between the two "appearings," the gracious and the glorious, turns upon these being, as to extent, commensurate. The universality, therefore, of the former must be measured by that of the latter; as to which there can be no question, for it is "to them that look for him that he is to appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation."

In the third text cited above (1 John ii. 2), the matter is, if possible, still more plain and certain. Let it be noted that in his first chapter, of which the beginning of the second should form a part (for there is no pause in the sense till after the second verse at the soonest) the apostle's discrimination of the persons (*we, you, they*) is very accurate and exact. In the beginning of the first chapter, he speaks of what he and his fellow-apostles witnessed of the manifestation of THE LIFE; and at the third verse he takes in those whom he is immediately addressing: "That which *we* have seen and heard declare we unto *you*, that *ye* also may have fellowship with *us*;" that is, may have the same fellowship which we have, or be partakers with us in "our fellowship," which "truly is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Thereafter, the apostle associates those to whom he thus writes with himself and his fellow-apostles—the taught with the teachers—and speaks in the first person, as now comprehending both: "If we walk in the light," you and we together, "as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another"—we with him and he with us, or you and we together with him. Twice, indeed, he briefly keeps up the distinction, when, as a master, he tells them, as his disciples, what he would have them to learn, and what is the great object of his testimony and teaching: "These things write we unto you that your joy may be full" (ch. i. 4)—"These things write I unto you that ye sin not" (ch. ii. 1)—fulness of joy, and freedom from sin, being the twofold end of Christian doctrine. But, otherwise,

he merges the "you" and the "we" in one: and especially, when he has to refer, alas! to the possibility of their yet contracting new guilt, and needing new forgiveness, "you" and "we" are no way separated now: "If any man sin"—any one of *you*; for though "I write these things unto you, as my little children, that ye sin not"—though my doctrine is as opposed to sin as God's light is to darkness—yet I dare not hope that you will be altogether sinless—I cannot but anticipate that you may fall into sin; for though you have in you that divine seed of the new life, which, in so far as it abides in you, makes sin impossible (ch. iii. 9), you are still liable to the lusting of the flesh against the Spirit;—I must remind you, therefore, that you are still apt to sin; not as if I would make allowances or grant indulgences beforehand for sin, but that I may tell you of your constant need of that cleansing blood which has been shed, and exhort you, on the very first instant of your being overtaken in a fault, to flee anew to that fountain, and that hastily, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin;—"if, therefore, any man sin," any one—any of *you*—but stay—*we* as well as *you* may be in the same predicament—"if any one sin"—any of you—any of us—"we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins." Is this merely a plausible paraphrase? or is it really the sense and meaning of the apostle, affectionately pouring out his heart to his "little children?" Then, if so, what can be the meaning of the short, abrupt, but most emphatic allu-

sion to a third party—"and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world?" For the apostle instantly returns to the "we" and the "you," and throughout all the chapter, and indeed the Epistle, keeps to that style and manner of warm epistolary familiarity. What, therefore, can the passing introduction of this seemingly extraneous reference imply? what, but that the apostle, with his truly catholic love to all brethren in Christ, calls to mind that others besides himself, and those to whom he writes, may be in the same sad case for which he has been making provision? If any of *us* sin, we have an advocate with the Father—we know where to find relief—we know how we may be restored, and have our backslidings healed. But this is too good news to be kept to ourselves; many, too many, in all successive ages, may need the same comfort and revival. For the admonition, therefore, of all, everywhere and to the end of time, who may be situated as it is here intimated, some, or all of us, may be—overtaken in a fault, fallen from their first love, lapsed into sin—the universal efficacy of this remedy is to be asserted, as available, in such circumstances, not for us only, but for all. Who does not see that thus interpreted, according to its connection, it cannot possibly be any general or universal reference of the atonement to all mankind, whether believers or not, that is meant? The whole propriety, sense, and force of the passage are gone, and all its sanctifying and comforting unction is evaporated, if it be held to denote anything whatever beyond that special efficacy of Christ's blood and inter-

cession, which cleanses the believer's conscience from the defilement of backsliding, and his heart from its baseness and bondage.

3. In 2 Pet. ii. 1; Heb. x. 29; 1 Cor. viii. 11; Rom. xiv. 15; we have a class of texts, in which, being "bought by the Lord," "sanctified (or cleansed) with the blood of the covenant," and interested in Christ as "dying for them," would seem to be represented as consistent with men "bringing upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Pet. ii. 1); "dying without mercy, and falling into the hands of the living God" (Heb. x. 29); "perishing," and "being destroyed," through the liberty of others becoming to them a stumbling-block. (1 Cor. viii. 11, and Rom. xiv. 15.) Now, it is remarkable that in all these passages, the strong and awful appeals made, turn on the right which God has in the parties referred to, rather than on the interest which they have in him: they assert God's prerogative, rather than their privilege; and proceed on the consideration, not of any claim which they have upon God, but of the claim which God has upon them. In this view, it is the assumption, as *de jure* more than the assertion, as *de facto*, involved in them, that gives to these texts, rightly apprehended, their peculiar emphasis and solemnity.

Thus, the first two of these texts bring out, in stern relief, on a background of bright profession and promise, the black guilt of apostasy, and of the bringing in of damnable heresies; the latter being applicable chiefly to the case of private members of the Church, who, beginning with "forsaking the assembling of

themselves together"—growing weary of godly fellowship and society—lapse gradually into "wilful sin," and are in imminent hazard of being finally and fatally hardened; the former, again, having respect to "teachers" in the Church, whose insidious poison of false doctrine tends to eat away as a canker, first the religion of the people, and then their own. For, alas! how often have ingenious innovators in the faith, or in the form of sound words, almost unwittingly unsettled and undermined the principles of others, before they have begun to feel, in their own souls, the destructive tendency of their speculations. In both of these instances, the Spirit's object is to paint, as with a lightning-flash across the thunder-cloud, the perilous position of the individuals who are to be warned; it is to startle them with a vivid insight into the view which God cannot but take of their aggravated sin, and a clear foresight of the inevitable ruin which it must entail on them. For everywhere, throughout Scripture, it is intimated, that whatever assurance believers may have of their final salvation, they are to be as sensitively alive to whatsoever has even the most remote tendency to a separation from Christ, as if they were every instant in danger of perishing; assurance, indeed, on any other footing, would be a carnal, and not a spiritual boon—disastrous, instead of salutary, to the soul. Hence the apostle's language in that remarkable passage (1 Cor. ix. 27), in which he intimates that he was as jealous over himself, in the article of bodily indulgence, as if he ever had in his eye the possibility of intemperance

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becoming, after all, his snare, and its bitter fruit his fate. And on the same principle, the two texts in question are to be understood as indicating, either, on the one hand, what true Christians, whether private members or office-bearers in the Church, must always keep before them, as the certain issue of an unstedfast walk, or of false teaching, should they be seduced into it; or, on the other, in what light God is entitled to regard their sin and danger, and in what character, considering their profession to him and his own right over them, he cannot fail to view and visit them, when he comes to judge them; their sin falling to be estimated, and their judgment to be determined, by the standard of their Christian name. It is as Christians that they are to be considered as sinning; and on that footing, they are to be condemned. ~~condemned.~~

The other two passages (1 Cor. viii. 11, and Rom. xiv. 15) being addressed, as warnings, to those who, on the strength of their own clearer light and firmer conscience, might despise or offend the weaker members of the Church, evidently point out the light in which the former are to regard the latter; as brethren, namely, interested in the same Saviour with themselves, yet not so secure as to be beyond the reach of serious and fatal injury, at the hands of their fellow-Christians. The lesson to the strong is twofold: Look not on the weak with contempt, as if their scruples were undeserving of attention; they are your brethren still, relying, as you do, on Christ as their only surety;—Neither plead, in excuse for any use of

your liberty that wounds or ensnares their consciences, that this is no concern of yours, since, if they are Christ's, he will keep them safe from harm ; so far as your conduct toward them is concerned, you are to treat them, even as you are to treat yourselves, with all that delicacy and tenderness which the most precarious and uncertain tenure of grace might prompt. To you, the humble believer, on whose unnecessary fastidiousness you are tempted to look down, and with whose minute cases of casuistry you are provoked to play, is still, with all his weakness, a brother, to be treated by you as a brother, for whom, as well as for you, Christ died : and whatever may be his security in the Saviour whom he trusts, that can be no reason for your trifling and tampering with his soul, if you would not have his blood to answer for ; but, on the contrary, if ever you are inclined to follow your own more liberal opinions, without respect to their influence on him, at that moment, whatever God may think of him, he is to you simply a brother, who, through your knowledge, and by your eating, is in extreme danger of perishing and being destroyed.

4. There is one other series of texts in which, as we freely admit, the universal bearing on mankind at large, of the exhibition of the cross and the proclamation of the gospel, is graciously and gloriously attested. These are such as John i. 29, iii. 16, iv. 42, xii. 32; 1 John iv. 14. Generally, these passages coincide, in substance, with those of the class first cited, which assert the indiscriminate applicability of Christ's work, without respect of persons, or distinction of

“Jew or Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free;” and they equally, with the former, fall under the remark of Professor Moses Stuart, in the extract which we have given from his book. But they seem to go a little farther; and having respect, not to the design and efficacy of the atonement, in its accomplishment and application, nor even, strictly speaking, to its sufficiency, but solely to the discovery which, as a historical transaction, it is fitted to make of the divine character—especially of the divine compassion and benevolence—they are to be regarded as giving intimation of the widest possible universality. This is particularly the case in that most blessed statement: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” For we would be little disposed to qualify or explain away the term “world,” as here employed. We rather rejoice in this text, as asserting that the gospel has a gracious aspect to the world, or to mankind as such. “God so loved the world”—that is, of mankind in opposition to angels—mankind as such, without reference to elect or non-elect; the giving of his Son was a display of goodwill towards men. Let it be observed, however, that even here nothing is said about God’s giving his Son for all; on the contrary, the very terms in which the gift of his Son is described, imply a limitation of it to them that believe; on which limitation, indeed, depends the fulness of the blessing conveyed by it. The design of Christ’s death is very pointedly restricted, as to its extent, to them that believe; while, on that very

account, this gift of God is amplified, and expanded, and stretched out, in regard to the amount of benefit intended to be communicated, so as to make it take in not only escape from perishing, but the possession of everlasting life. It is the gift of his Son, with this limited design, which is represented as being an index and measure of his love to the world at large, or to mankind as such; and it is so, through the manifestation which the cross gives to all alike and indiscriminately, of what it is in the mind and heart of God to do for a race of guilty sinners. As to any farther meaning in that text, it can only be this: that it is a testimony to the priority or precedency of God's love to man, as going before, and not following from, the mediation and work of Christ. We speak, of course, of the order and nature of causation, not of the order of time; in the counsels of eternity there can be no comparing of dates. But it is important to adjust the connection of sequence or dependence between the love of God to man, and the work of Christ for man, as cause and effect, respectively. And one main object of this statement of our Lord undoubtedly is, to represent the Father's goodwill to men as the source and origin of the whole scheme of salvation, in opposition to the false and superstitious idea of God's kindness being, as it were, purchased and reluctantly extorted by the interposition of one more favourable and friendly than himself to our guilty and perishing world.

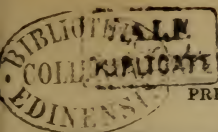
5. Among these various classes of texts which we have been considering, there is a single passage which

seems to stand isolated and alone, namely, Heb. ii. 9. Now, as to this passage, one thing, at least, is very clear—that the apostle's train of reasoning has no reference whatever to the question of the extent of Christ's work, but only to the depth of that humiliation, on his part, which it implied, and the height of glory for which it prepared the way; and in other portions of this very chapter, he distinctly limits to the elect the whole of His mediatorial character, office, and ministry. (Compare verses 10, 13–17.) In the verses before us, he is expounding the Eighth Psalm, in connection with his argument for the superiority of Christ over the angels, which occupies the first two chapters of this book. He regards that psalm as a prediction of the Messiah's exaltation, in human nature, far above the visible glory of the moon-lit and starry heavens; and, in particular, he interprets it, as announcing also His previous and preliminary abasement. He thus turns the lowly appearance of Jesus, in the flesh, which might have been urged as an objection against his high and heavenly rank, into an article of evidence in its favour. It was in accordance with prophecy that the Messiah should be thus humbled, in the first instance, and should thereafter and thereupon be exalted to glory. But the apostle does not rest merely on the word of prophecy; he appeals to the very nature and necessity of the case, as requiring that the Messiah's exaltation should be reached through humiliation. If He is to be crowned with glory and honour, it is to be for the suffering of death—for which suffering of death he must

be made lower than the angels. But why lower than the angels? Because, for the carrying out of the purposes of the grace of God, he is "to taste death for every man." It is quite manifest that the *number* of those for whom he is to taste death is an element altogether irrelevant to the scope of the apostle's discourse: it is their *nature* alone that it is in point and to the purpose to notice: any reference to the *universality* of the atonement would be here out of place. But this is not all. A reference, so to speak, to the *individuality* of the atonement, will be found to be most significant. And such a reference this text contains. The assertion is, that Christ must taste death for men, one by one, as it were, individually and personally, bearing the sins of each. This is opposed to the notion of his death, or his work of atonement, having a reference merely to mankind collectively, and in the mass. Had it been a work of that sort—a method of vindicating the divine justice, and opening a door of pardon, common to all—it does not appear how it might not have been accomplished by him without his becoming lower than the angels. In the angelic nature itself, it might be conceived possible for him to have effected the adjustment required. But the work being one of substitution, representation, suretyship, and, in fact, identification—in which he is not to sustain a general relation to the race, as a whole, but a very special, particular, and personal relation to men, one by one—taking the place of each, and meeting all the obligations, responsibilities, and liabilities of each—the necessity of his manhood becomes apparent. Had it been

a general measure for upholding the divine government, and introducing a general amnesty for all, there might have been other ways; but when it was to be "the tasting of death for each," there could be but one: he must take upon him the very nature of the individual whom he is to represent. There is much meaning to believers, and much ground for mourning on the one hand (Zech. xii. 10), and comfort on the other (Gal. ii. 20), in this view of the efficacy of Christ's death being distributed among them; and that, not in the way of division, as if each got a part, but, as it were, in the way of multiplication, so that each gets all; and every man of them may as truly realize Christ's tasting death, specially and personally, for him, as if he had been the only sinner, in whose stead, and on whose behalf, Jesus was nailed to the cross.

Having thus briefly indicated—for we have done little more—the line of interpretation applicable to the general body of texts which seem, at first sight, to favour the theory of universal redemption—and having also given some specimens of the satisfactory manner in which what seems to us a fair, sound, and reasonable principle, or canon, of scriptural criticism may be applied to particular passages—we feel that our task is nearly done. For it is not our intention to enlarge on the numerous statements in the Word of God which explicitly teach, or by plain and necessary inference involve, the doctrine for which we contend; which may be said to be neither more nor less than this: that for whomsoever Christ died at all, for them he



died efficaciously and effectually. These statements must, of course, be submitted to the test of the same general rule which was used as a criterion in the case of those already quoted; and, indeed, they are all such as court and challenge the trial. For there is this general difference between the two classes of texts—those which seem to assert a general, and those which rather point to a restricted and limited, reference in the atoning work of Christ—that while the former easily admit of a clear and consistent interpretation, such as makes them harmonize with the doctrine which, at first sight, they might be supposed to contradict, it is altogether otherwise with the latter; it can only be a process of distortion—by their being made to suffer violence—that they can be so explained away as to become even neutral in the controversy. It is remarkable, accordingly, that the opponents of the Calvinistic view rarely, if ever, apply themselves to the task of showing what fair construction may be put, according to their theory, on the texts usually cited against them. They think it enough simply to collect an array of texts which, when uttered in single notes, give a sound similar to that of their own trumpet; and although we undertake to prove, in every instance, that the sound, even taken alone, is, at the least, a very uncertain one, and that, when combined and blended with the sounds of other notes in the same bar or cleff, the general result of the harmonized melody is such as to chime in with the strain which we think we find elsewhere—they are very slow in dealing thus with the texts quoted on

the other side. But it is surely as incumbent upon them to explain how the texts on our side are to be interpreted consistently with their views, as it is on us to make a corresponding attempt in regard to the texts which they claim as theirs. This, however, it would be by no means easy to do. For, setting aside all partial counsel in this inquiry, and coming to the passages referred to, not for the purpose of reconciling them with any supposed "analogy of the faith," but exclusively bent on looking at each in the light of its own context or connection, we can scarcely fail to perceive that the assertion of a limited or restricted atonement is by no means in them, what that of a universal redemption would have been in the other series of passages we have considered—an excrescence upon the argument in hand, not in point or to the purpose, but intrusive and embarrassing—embarrassing, we of course mean, not to the controversialist, but to the critic, in his exegesis or exposition of the particular verses under review. On the contrary, this assertion of limitation or restriction, as being the characteristic feature of Christ's work, is at the very heart of these passages—essential to the writer's or the speaker's argument or reasoning, at the time, and indeed, essential to what he says having any meaning at all. To illustrate this, let us take a few examples, classing them according to the several practical ends or objects with which this doctrine stands connected, and to which it is made subservient, in the several passages in which it is announced.

Thus, *in the first place*, the certainty of the salva-

tion of believers is in a remarkable manner bound up in Holy Scripture, with this doctrine. They for whom Christ died cannot perish; and it is his dying for them that makes their perishing an impossibility. This is very clearly brought out in the tenth chapter of John's Gospel. There it is explicitly declared by Christ himself that he was to "lay down his life for the sheep" (ver. 15); and that this declaration is exclusive—implying that he lays down his life for them alone, without any reference to the world at large—is to be inferred from the connection in which he introduces it. He is enlarging on the security which his people have in him; and it is as the proof of this—the only tangible proof which he alleges—that he brings in the appeal to the fact of his dying for them. But this would be no proof at all, if others besides his sheep were interested in his death; or, which is the same thing, if any for whom he laid down his life might, after all, perish. Hence, in a subsequent part of the chapter (ver. 25–30), it is expressly given as the reason why some believe not, and therefore are lost, that they are not of his sheep, for whom he lays down his life; and, on the other hand, the safety of believers, or the security that they shall never perish, is made to depend on their being his sheep, to whom he gives eternal life (ver. 28), and whom the Father hath given to him (ver. 29); the former of these gifts being the consequence, and the latter the cause, of his laying down his life for them, and for them alone. He lays down his life for those whom the Father hath given him; and to those for whom he lays down his life, he

giveth eternal life; and this is that threefold cord, not to be quickly broken, which fastens believers to the Rock of Ages;—the Father's gift of a people to the Son to be his sheep; the Son's dying for his sheep thus given to him by the Father; and his giving to them, as the fruit of his dying for them, eternal life. But unless all the three lines in this cord be of equal extent, it cannot hold fast—it must yield, or stretch, or break; nor, on any supposition of a wider purpose in the death of the Son than in the gift which the Father makes to him of a chosen number to be his sheep, is there any value in the assurance with which the Lord rivets the last link of the chain: "I and my Father are one." (Ver. 30.)

The security or certainty of the salvation of Christ's people may be considered in two lights—either as ordained by God, or as realized by themselves.

In the former point of view, it seems to be connected with Christ's dying for them, and for them alone, in the closing verses of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah; where the promise to the Messiah, that he shall see his seed, is specially represented as turning upon his soul being made an offering for sin. It is said of him that "he bare the sin of many," when "he poured out his soul unto death;" and that the "many" whose "sin he bare," are identical with that "seed of his own that he is to see," is as clearly to be gathered from the whole strain of the passage, as that the "many" whom, as "the righteous servant of God, he is to justify, through the knowledge of himself," are identical with those "whose iniquities he is to bear."

(Vers. 10-12). In fact, it seems amazing that any can read that single marvellous and momentous clause: "He shall see of the travail (or sorrow) of his soul, and be satisfied"—knowing what "the travail of his soul" means, and believing it to have been his really taking upon himself the guilt, and enduring the curse, of a broken law—and yet admit it to be possible that any for whom he can be said, in any sense, to have died on the cross should, after all, perish for ever. Was his soul in travail for any of the lost? Was it in travail for any who were not given to him to be his seed? Would this have been consistent with his seeing the fruit of that travail of his soul, so as to be satisfied?—adequately satisfied, according to the measure of the Father's satisfaction in him? "He shall see his seed;" "he shall see of the travail of his soul;"—the "pouring out of his soul unto the death" being, as it were, the very birth-pang,* through which the relation of his

* It is remarkable that this is the only unequivocal passage (for Isa. ix. 6, where he is called "the Everlasting Father;" and 1 John ii. 29, where it is said that "as he is righteous, so every one that doeth righteousness is born of him," are ambiguous) in which Christ's people are represented as standing to him in this relation of children or seed towards a parent; and the representation turns, apparently, on the "travail" or grievous labour of his soul, of which they were to be the fruit. His seed, then, are they for whom his soul travailed; and all for whom his soul travailed are his seed; so called, as being the recompense and result of his agony—the purchase of his pain. Nor does the view here indicated turn upon the precise meaning of the word rendered "travail," as if it denoted the pang of child-birth; like that other expression which Paul uses, when, claiming such a tender interest in his converts as a mother has in those whose birth has cost her sorrow (John xvi. 21), he thus affectionately appeals to them: "My little children, of whom I travail

people to himself, as "his seed," is constituted, and his life is communicated to them; his death being their life;—and so he shall be satisfied. In the sixth chapter of John, also—in which we may conceive of our Lord as appealing to this very promise of the everlasting covenant, and pleading it as his ground of confidence and comfort, amid his endurance of the contradiction of sinners against himself—we find him putting very strongly the impossibility of any of his people being lost. He is speaking to the unbelieving Jews; and, taking a high tone of sovereign authority, he exposes, with withering severity, the impotency of their unbelief. They were apt to regard him as, in some sort, a candidate for their favour—presenting himself to their choice, and soliciting their suffrages, like one dependent upon them, and standing at their mercy—a view which sinners are still too generally apt to take of Him with whom, in the offer of his salvation, they have to do. The Lord gives no countenance to such trifling and dallying with his paramount claims, and his peremptory commands and calls. Let not these unbelievers imagine that he has need of them, or that they can either benefit or injure him. They may reject, they may oppose, they may persecute his

in birth again until Christ be formed in you." (Gal. iv. 19.) It may be allowed that the term here employed by Isaiah means grief and labour generally. Still, this sorrow of Messiah's soul, of which he is to see a satisfying issue, stands connected with his "seeing his seed;" and still, therefore, it would appear that they for whom this sorrow is endured, must be identified with his seed; and that they are his seed, because his agony of soul, endured on their behalf, is the very cause of their life.

person and his cause; but they hurt only themselves; his triumph is certain, whatever they may do; he is sure of having followers and friends enough. And here, he first cites the Father's deed of gift, as the ultimate source of his security on this head, and as making it infallibly certain, both that "all that the Father giveth him shall come unto him," and also, that "whosoever cometh to him he will in no wise cast out." (Ver. 37.) And then, he goes on to explain, with special and exclusive reference to them, the precise meaning of those general statements respecting himself, which so much scandalized the Jews: "The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world;" "I am the bread of life;" "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Do these announcements convey the impression of his death having a universal reference to all? Are we to understand what he says about his coming down from heaven to "give life unto the world," and his "giving his flesh for the life of the world," as pointing to a universal atonement? Where, then, so far as his own confidence was concerned, would he have any security that his death might not be in vain? In the decree of the Father, it may be replied, and his deed of gift, promising to his Son a chosen seed. True, he is to "give his flesh for the life of the world;" and if that expression is to be pressed as proving the universality of his atonement, many of those for whom

he died are to be lost—many “see him, and believe not” (ver. 36); still it is certain that some will take advantage of the general provision of grace; for “all that the Father giveth him shall come to him.” Such is the view which is sometimes given; but it is only one-half of what satisfies Christ. Their coming to him is made sure by the sovereign will of the Father; and so also is his receiving of them to give them life—which he can do only by giving his life for them. It is the will of the Father that they should come to me; it is the will of the Father that I should in no wise cast them out; that I should lose none of them; that every one of them, in me, should have everlasting life; and that I should “raise him up at the last day.” And this will of the Father, under which both their coming to me, and my giving them life, fall—and by which both are rendered certain—is not merely his will of good pleasure, or what he desires, but his will of decree, or what he determines. That Christ came to give life unto the world, as such—the world of mankind, without respect of persons—Gentiles as well as Jews—is a declaration similar to those other announcements: “He came to seek and to save the lost:”—“he is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;” and, like them, it is full of encouragement to sinners of all descriptions and of all degrees. Were it left on this footing, however, there would seem to be an element of indistinctness introduced into the transaction. But the certainty of his work being effectual is infallibly secured, by there being a people given to him by the Father, and by his offering of his flesh as the

living bread being restricted to them; since now, whatever others do, they are sure to come; and coming, they are sure of life in him.

For we may observe, in leaving this passage, that it bears also on the other point of view in which the certainty or security of the salvation of Christ's people may be considered, namely, as not merely ordained by God, but realized by themselves. This the Lord presses as a strong inducement to sinners to come to him; assuring them, that coming unto him, they never can be, in any wise, cast out—they will be, and must be, infallibly safe. And what constitutes their security? Is it not the will of the Father specially ordaining for them, and therefore restricting to them, the life-giving work of the Son?

And here, we might refer to other portions of Scripture in which the atoning death of Christ is represented as securing the salvation of his people. For indeed, in all instances in which they are called upon to realize their security at all, it is upon the footing of his dying for them, and of the exclusive reference which his work has to them. On this footing the Lord himself places the matter in his intercessory prayer. (John xvii.) Nothing can well be clearer, as brought out in that prayer, than the limitation of the entire work of Christ to the people given to him by the Father. Of the design of his interposing as mediator at all, he intimates that it is with a view to his "giving life to as many as the Father hath given him;" as to his obedience unto death, or "the work given him to do, which he finished" ere he left the world, and by which

he “manifested the Father’s name,” he expressly restricts it all to “the men given him out of the world;” and of his work of intercession, which he then began, and now prosecutes in heaven, he speaks, if possible, still more explicitly: “I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.” But his intercession is inseparably connected with his work of atonement—that work being the very ground of it, and the most essential ingredient in it. For the intercession of Christ is not a persuasive pleading upon his atonement, but the presenting of the atonement itself before God;—on which account these two, Christ’s work of intercession and his work of atonement, must be co-extensive;—for, if he intercede for some only of those for whom he died, he must have some additional plea to urge on their behalf, beyond the merit of his death. “I pray for them: for they are thine.” That, and that alone, is the reason why I take so deep an interest in them—that is the reason why I lay down my life for them, and intercede for them. They are dear to me, because they are thine; “and all mine are thine, and thine are mine.” Ay, though many of them, “not knowing what they do,” will be found among the number of my persecutors and murderers, yet, even when they are nailing me on the cross, I will pray for them,—for whom, as well as by whom, my blood is poured out,—“Father, forgive them.” Thus Christ unequivocally restricts and limits his own work of obedience, atonement, and intercession, to those whom the Father hath given him; and it is upon his

work, as thus limited and restricted, that he establishes their perfect security in him, which he would have them to realize (ver. 11): "Holy Father, keep through thine own name," which I have manifested to them, "those whom thou hast given me; that they may be one, as we are." And in exact accordance with this prayer of the Lord, we find Paul resting the assurance of believers on the death of Christ, as that which, by its own exclusive efficacy, secures their salvation. We refer especially to Rom. v. 9, 10, and viii. 34; as well as also to Rom. iv. 16, where the assurance of the promise, or its being sure, which is declared to be the very end or design of its being "of faith," and "by grace"—or gratuitous and free—is very pointedly connected with its being limited to "all the seed." In these, and various other passages, it is uniformly implied, that to have an interest in Christ, in the sense of being among the number of those for whom he died, secures, infallibly, everlasting salvation. And this is what every anxious and inquiring soul longs to have. He may be in difficulty as to his warrant to appropriate Christ's death as for him; he may have difficulty as to the evidence of his having rightly and warrantably done so; but these are his only difficulties—the one in the direct, the other in the reflex, act of faith. To separate between the proposition, "He gave himself for me," and the proposition, "I am safe for eternity"—whatever hesitation I may have in timidly apprehending, and scarcely venturing hopefully to realize, the former—would be to cut off the very bridge by which, as a prisoner of hope, I can ever

dream of reaching the stronghold to which I would flee.

But, further, *in the second place*, the completeness, as well as the certainty, of the salvation of Christ's people is, in many passages of Scripture, remarkably bound up with statements implying a limitation of his purchased redemption. Here, we might quote again some of the passages already commented on, such as the tenth and sixth chapters of John, in which the fulness of the provision made for Christ's sheep, or those given him by the Father, as well as the security of their position, is connected with his dying for them. But there are other texts which set this connection in a great variety of striking and affecting points of view. Thus, there are some which represent the death of Christ as the highest conceivable instance of his love, and the Father's; upon which an argument, *a fortiori*, is to be based, as to what his people may expect at his hands. In the fifteenth chapter of John, the Lord is dwelling at length, on the abundance of fruit which he would have his disciples to bring forth, the fulness of joy of which he would make them partakers, the large desires in prayer which he is ready to satisfy, and the copious stream of mutual love which he would have to flow from himself through all their hearts; and, as if to convince them that there could be nothing, in the way of attainment or enjoyment, too high for them to aspire after, he appeals to his dying for them, as explaining all and justifying all: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." The whole force

of this motive to enlargement of expectation is gone, if his death be not the pledge of his special love to his friends; for if no greater proof of love can be given than his laying down his life, and if it be not for his friends, exclusively, but, in a sense, for the whole world, that he does lay down his life, what has he in reserve to demonstrate his affection for his people? Can he give them any proof of love greater than he gives the world? The same view is supported by the argument of the apostle (Rom. viii. 32, v. 1-11); in both of which passages he represents believers as arguing from the mere fact of Christ's dying for them, that they may claim and challenge all the abundant blessings of grace and salvation. This they could never do were his death a propitiation or atonement in which they had a common interest with the reprobate and lost. They might, in that case, reason from the Spirit's work in them, making them Christ's, but scarcely, as they do, from the mere fact of Christ's dying for them. The statement of our Lord, however, as we have quoted it, is still more precise. It is a clear assertion that he laid down his life for his friends; and that this must mean that he laid it down for them exclusively, is apparent from the view he teaches them to take of his death, as the highest instance of his love, as well as from the use he would have them to make of it, as warranting unlimited ambition in the life and fellowship of God.

On this subject of the completeness of the salvation of Christ's people, we might bring forward many passages in which the several elements of their blessedness are so connected with the death of Christ for

them, as to preclude the possibility of that event being regarded in any other light than as a special atonement for their sins exclusively, and as purchasing, by its own intrinsic efficacy, for them alone, all things pertaining to life and godliness. We might particularly notice the manner in which the gift of the Spirit is represented as bound up with the work of Christ, so as to convey the irresistible impression that they must be of the same extent; and we might enlarge on the very numerous texts in which the peculiar relation of Christ to his people is set forth; and his dying for them is made the very index and crowning glory of that relation. But we have prolonged this introduction much beyond our intention, and we fear, also, beyond our readers' patience.

We briefly notice, therefore, *in the third place*, that the death of Christ is often spoken of in Scripture, in connection with the duties, obligations, and responsibilities of his people, in such a manner as necessarily to imply its restriction and limitation to them. Two particular passages occur for illustration of this remark. In Eph. v. 25, it is expressly asserted that Christ gave himself for the Church; and this is cited as the proof and measure of that special love of Christ to the Church, which is to be the model of true conjugal affection: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it." The appeal is unmeaning, if Christ gave himself for any besides the Church; for then, his giving of himself can be evidence of nothing more than his general regard for mankind at large; which, surely, is not the type of the love that husbands are

to have for their wives. Again, in Acts xx. 28, the Apostle Paul, addressing the elders of the Church of Ephesus, reminds them of their duty to feed the Church of God; and he enforces that duty by two considerations—the one taken from their peculiar relation to that Church, as having been made its overseers by the Holy Ghost; the other, from God's own relation to it, as having bought it: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." There would be no force in this last consideration, as bringing out the value which God attaches to his Church, and the corresponding responsibility which he lays on all who have anything to do with it, if the blood of Christ was shed for others besides the Church: for then, these others, equally with the Church, are purchased by him, and there is no peculiar sacredness at all in the Church, so far as this consideration goes, nor any peculiar delicacy in dealing with it.

Besides these particular passages, in which the limitation of Christ's death to his people is explicitly asserted, we might refer to that great family of texts, in which the position assigned to believers is described. They are bought with a price: they are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ: they are his purchased possession: he gave his soul a ransom for many. Throughout, we find very much of their peace, and still more of their holiness, made to depend on their realizing the fact of their being purchased, bought, redeemed, by the death of Christ: and they are never

taught to look upon his death in any other light than that of a price and a ransom. But all this is inexplicable on the supposition of his having died for men generally and universally; for then, it is not simply on account of his dying for them, that they can be said to be redeemed or bought, in any sense that can distinguish them from others—which is the uniform and invariable scriptural representation—but on account of something else—something additional, or something different altogether. And finally, to pass from the present scene of trial to the future world of blessedness and glory, how unmeaning, on any theory of a universal reference in the atonement, does the song of the countless multitude before the throne become! There we see the mighty mystery of God's will accomplished; even the purpose which he purposed in himself;—"that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him." (Eph. i. 10.) One universal family or household is gathered together, out of every kindred, and people, and nation, and tongue; and the note of praise which, as they sing the new song, they all with united voices give forth, is but one continued acknowledgment of special obligation to the Lamb, for his death; and for his death as exclusively on their behalf; otherwise it could not be, by itself, any special ground of thanksgiving; which they expressly make it, when they salute their Saviour with the adoring hymn: "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood!"

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREE CHURCH MAGAZINE."

Edinburgh, December 10, 1844.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have often been urged by others, as well as by yourself, to explain my sentiments on the subject of the extent of the atonement; more particularly with reference to some statements bearing upon that subject, which I am reported to have made in the address which I delivered at the bicentenary meeting held here in July 1843, to commemorate the Westminster Assembly. These statements, as I am informed, have been referred to in public, and more frequently in private, as if they implied a concurrence, on my part, in the views alleged to be held by some respected brethren in the Secession Church, relative to the sense in which they think Christ may be said to have died for all men. I have the utmost reluctance to engage in this controversy, and I must disclaim, at the very outset of my remarks, any intention of reflecting on individuals; for I really have not studied what has been published even by such men as Dr John Brown and the late Dr Balmer on this question; nor have I interested myself in the discussion of it in recent pamphlets and periodicals. But as it seems to be thought that some explanation is due to my brethren, I have at last resolved to address myself to the unwelcome task. Were I inclined to evade an irksome duty, I might content myself with the intimation, that I had no opportunity of revising the report of my address, on the occasion in question, and cannot, therefore, be considered responsible for its accuracy. Had I seen the report before it was published, I believe I would have amplified and qualified the portion of it which, it seems, has been misunderstood; for scarcely any of the address was fully written out beforehand, and that portion of it, in particular, was delivered from very brief and imperfect notes, my time being so occupied as to prevent me from making that accurate preparation which was due to the subject, the occasion, and the assembly. I relied

on my being allowed to correct the report taken at the time; and, especially in reference to so difficult and delicate a point of theology, I may say, that I would not otherwise have ventured to approach it as I did. Through some oversight, the report was not sent to me for revision—a circumstance which I have regretted only since I have learned that my observations have been deemed worthy of the honour of being animadverted upon at all. I need scarcely say, that I impute no blame to any one but myself on this account.* But, while I might satisfy myself with this general disavowal, I feel that something more may be called for by others, whose good opinion I highly value. And, especially considering that I do not, on turning to the passage in question, see anything material to be retracted—however much there may be that would require to be more guardedly, perhaps, as well as more correctly and elaborately expressed—I feel that it would be somewhat like an unworthy shift, to shrink from the responsibility of the address, even as thus insufficiently reported. May I request you, therefore, to give insertion to the following remarks, in which, far from professing to discuss the subject thoroughly, my object is merely to explain and enlarge the brief and cursory allusion to it which I made, in the course of treating a far wider theme.—I am, &c.

ROB. S. CANDLISH.

* I subjoin in the Appendix the portion of the report referred to. See Appendix A.

ON THE ATONEMENT.

CHAPTER I.

THE question being, *in the first place*, Was the death of Christ, or his work of obedience unto death, considered in the light of a satisfaction rendered to divine justice, and an atonement made for human guilt, undertaken and accomplished for any but the elect?—we answer, without qualification or reserve, in the negative. They for whom Christ died are infallibly saved.

If it be asked, *secondly*, Has the death of Christ any relation at all to mankind at large, whether elect or not?—we reply, that the condition of those at least to whom the knowledge of it comes, as regards their present obligation and ultimate responsibility, is most materially affected by the event or fact in question, or rather, by the publication of it. Assuredly the guilt and condemnation of those who have had the gospel among them, and have rejected it, cannot be put upon a level with the criminality of such as

have never heard the joyful sound; and, in so far as God, in his providence, gives any information to the heathen, respecting his long-suffering patience and love, as connected with a mediatorial provision of grace, they are left the more without excuse.

The *third* inquiry, having reference to the precise bearing of Christ's death upon the world at large, including the unbelieving portion of it, is the very question which we declined, and must still decline, to answer, or, at least, to answer categorically, or so as to exhaust the inquiry; it being our opinion that Holy Scripture has not given materials for any very explicit deliverance upon that point. At the same time, there are some particulars, under this head, which may be ascertained. Thus:—

I. In point of fact, the death of Christ, or his work of obedience and atonement, has procured for the world at large, and for every individual—the impenitent and unbelieving as well as the chosen, and called, and faithful—certain definite, tangible, and ascertainable benefits (if we may use such words to designate their reality and their specific character), among which, in particular, may be noted these two : *first*, A season of forbearance—a respite or suspension of judgment—a period of grace (Rom. iii. 25); * and that, too, in subserviency, and with direct reference, to the plan of saving mercy (ibid., and Rom. ii, 4; and 2 Pet. iii. 15); and, *secondly*, A system of means and influences fitted to lead men to God, and sufficient to leave them without excuse. (Acts xiv. 15–17, and

* See Appendix B.

xvii. 22-31; Rom. i. 18, and ii. 15.) This, since the promulgation of the gospel, includes all the ordinances of God's Word and worship, with the accompanying common operations of the Spirit in them.*

Nor does it affect this statement, as to the actual obligation under which mankind at large, including the finally lost, lie to Christ and his work, for benefits, in point of fact, real and valuable, that this season of long-suffering, and this system of means, are extended to them all indiscriminately, mainly and chiefly for the sake of the elect who are among them. For, *in the first place*, It does not appear that this can be established, from Scripture, to be the only reason which God has for such a mode of dealing with the world. It is true, indeed, that the elect are the salt of the earth, whose presence would procure a respite even for a Sodom; and when they are gathered in, and not a soul remains to be converted, the end will come. But this does not prove that God may not have other ends to serve, besides the salvation of his elect people—and ends more closely connected with the individuals themselves who are thus spared and subjected to salutary influences, though in vain—when he extends to them his goodness for a time. And, *secondly*, Whether directly or indirectly—mediately or immediately—for their own sakes or the elect's—the fact, after all, is the same—and it is important and significant—that the forbearance granted to every sinner, and the favour shown in such a way as should lead him to repentance, must be ascribed to the inter-

* See Appendix C.

position of Christ, and his sacrifice on the cross. May not this consideration, of itself, go far to explain not only the strong and touching appeals made generally to sinners, as forsaking their own mercies (Jonah ii. 8), but even such awful denunciations as that uttered by the Apostle Peter respecting apostates bringing in damnable heresies, that they deny the Lord that bought them? (Second Epistle ii. 1)—not to speak of a still more terrible sense in which even the reprobate may be truly said to be bought by Christ, inasmuch as, for his obedience unto death, he has received the right, and power, and commission to dispose of them, and deal with them, as it may seem meet, for the honour of his Father's name, and the salvation of his people. (Ps. ii.; John xvii. 2.)

It may be observed, in passing, that there is a double sense in which we may speak of Christ's purchase; *first*, Strictly and properly, when we regard him as purchasing men; and, *secondly*, More improperly, when we consider him as purchasing benefits for men. This last view, as we have hinted, is rather figurative and metaphorical than real and literal; for the idea of his purchasing benefits from the Father for mankind, must ever be understood in consistency with the Father's sovereignty, and his pre-existing love to the children of men. The Father is not induced or persuaded to bestow benefits on men by a price paid to him; but being antecedently full of compassion to all, and having a purpose to save some, he appoints and ordains—he decrees and brings in—this death of his Son as a satisfaction to divine justice, and a propitiation

for human guilt, that he may be justified in showing forbearance and kindness to the world, as well as in ultimately and gloriously saving his own elect. In this view, as it would seem, it may be said, with equal fitness, and equal truth, that Christ purchased the benefits implied in the long-suffering of God for all, and that he purchased the blessings of actual salvation for his elect; inasmuch as, so far as appears from Scripture, his death is no less indispensable a condition of any being spared for a season, than it is of some being everlastingly saved.

In regard, again, to the other light in which Christ's purchase may be viewed as a purchase, not of certain benefits for men, but of men themselves, there is room for an important distinction. In right of his merit, his service, and his sacrifice, all are given into his hands, and all are his. All, therefore, may be said to be bought by him, inasmuch as, by his humiliation, obedience, and death, he has obtained, as by purchase, a right over all—he has got all under his power. But it is for very different purposes and ends. The reprobate are his to be judged; the elect are his to be saved. As to the former, it is no ransom or redemption, fairly so called. He has won them—bought them, if you will—but it is that he may so dispose of them as to glorify the retributive righteousness of God in their condemnation; aggravated, as that condemnation must be, by their rejection of himself. This is no propitiation, in any sense at all—no offering of himself to bear their sins—no bringing in of a perfect righteousness on their account; but an office or function which he

has obtained for himself by the same work—or has had intrusted to him for the sake of the same shedding of blood—by which he expiated the sins of his people, as their true and proper substitute, and merited their salvation, as their representative and head—an office or function, moreover, which he undertakes solely on his people's behalf, and which he executes faithfully for their good, as well as for his Father's glory.

II. In addition to this general benefit, in point of fact, resulting to mankind at large from the interposition of Christ, or rather, perhaps, as included in it, may be mentioned the manifestation which the death of Christ is fitted to give to all men, universally, and to every individual alike, of the divine character and the divine plan of salvation. In this view, Christ is the light which, coming into the world, lighteth every man. Lifted up upon the cross, Jesus reveals the Father, and the Father's provision for reconciling the exercise of mercy towards the guilty with the maintenance of law and justice; and this service is rendered, not to the elect specially, but to men generally and universally.

III. Nor, lastly, is it to be omitted that the cross of Christ is the proof and measure of that infinite compassion which dwells in the bosom of God towards each and all of the lost race of Adam, and his infinite willingness, or rather longing and yearning desire, to receive each and all of them again into his favour. Even the cross itself would almost seem to be an inadequate expression—though a blessed confirmation

of what is in his heart; of the feeling, so to speak, to which he gives utterance by an oath, when he swears: "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth;" and of the deep, ineffable sincerity of his assurance, that he would rather—how much rather!—that the sinner should turn unto him and live.

There is a well known theological distinction between God's will of decree (*voluntas decreti*) and his will of desire or of good pleasure (*voluntas beneplaciti*)—between what his mind, on a consideration of all interests, actually determines, and what his heart, from its very nature, if we may venture the expression, must prefer and wish. The types, or expressions, of these two wills respectively, are to be found in the two texts commonly quoted to illustrate them;—the first, Rom. ix. 19: "Who hath resisted his will?" the second, Matt. xxiii. 37: "How often *would I have* gathered you, and ye would not!" (See also Ps. lxxxi. 13–16, and various other passages.) This latter, as distinguished from the former, denotes the pure complacency with which God approves of a certain result as just and holy in itself, and delights in it, and therefore *wills* to enjoin it on the creature, as his most bounden duty; and, in enjoining it, cannot but add the assurance of his willing acceptance of it, whensoever, wheresoever, and howsoever realized.

Even in a human agent, some such distinction must be recognised. Knowing his character *and his heart*, you at once can specify what would be most agreeable and welcome to him, as the scene or spectacle which

he would most delight to contemplate. But you must know a great deal more respecting his opinions, and the circumstances with which these come into contact—or, in a word, respecting *his mind*—his judgment as to what, in certain contingencies, he is to do, and the reasons of his judgment—before you can be qualified to understand the whole of his procedure. Still, if he were a straightforward man, you would act without hesitation, in any case in which your personal interest was concerned, on what you knew of his heart, although you might have much perplexity in discerning all the views which, in certain difficult cases, entered into the making up of his mind. Thus, to take a familiar instance—which, however, must by no means be pressed too far—a man of undoubted and notorious beneficence to the industrious poor, or the poor willing to be industrious, has peculiar opinions on pauperism generally, and on the right mode of dealing with certain instances of pauperism, which involve his conduct in some degree of mystery to the uninitiated, and might give rise to various questions in regard to some parts of his procedure. Now, if I am a beggar, perishing without his aid, shall I perplex myself with difficulties arising out of my ignorance of the reasons that determine his resolution in these particulars?—or shall I proceed upon my acquaintance with his acknowledged goodness, and, on the faith of his own express invitations, appeal at once to his generosity and truth for what is needed to meet my case? Evidently, in such a state of matters, I would practically draw the distinction. Knowing my friend's character, and

frankly interpreting his frank assurances to me, and all situated like me—without reference to any inquiries that might be raised respecting his actual treatment of particular cases not, as yet, fully explained to me—I would venture confidently to make my appeal to him, and feel no anxiety as to the issue. So is it with God; his will, as determining what, in every case, is to be the actual result, is an act of his omniscient *mind*, which he need not explain to us; but his will, as defining what, in every case, would be the result most agreeable and welcome to him, is an inherent part of his nature, and, as it were, a feature of his *heart*. In the one view, his will is consistent with many being impenitent and lost; in the other, it would have all men everywhere to repent and be saved.

Now, it is into this latter will—this will of the DIVINE HEART—and not into the former, the will of the DIVINE MIND—it is into what God, from his very nature, must and does desire, in reference to lost sinners, and not into what God, for ends and on principles as yet unknown, has decreed—that the cross, as such, considered merely *objectively*, as presented to the eye, and not *subjectively*, as experienced and realized in the heart, gives mankind at large, and every individual, if he will but look, a clear, unequivocal, and most satisfying insight. To every individual, believer or not, elect or not, it is a proof and pledge of the Father's bowels of compassion yearning over him, and the Father's eye looking out for him, and the Father's arms open to embrace him freely, if he will be but moved to return; *and to no individual,*

before he believes, is it, or can it be, anything more; to none does it beforehand impart any further insight into the mind and will of God, as a warrant or encouragement to believe.

Nor is more needed; for, on the subject of the universality of the gospel offer or call, and its sincerity and good faith on the part of God, as well as its sufficiency as regards men, let the following observations be considered:—

1. To vindicate God in this procedure, and satisfy men, it is enough that these two things be acknowledged and established—*first*, His right to require and command the sinner's return to himself; and, *secondly*, His willingness and ability, in consistency with the ends of justice, to save all such as do return. It is irrelevant here to raise any question either as to the extent, or even as to the sufficiency, of the atonement. It is enough that it is sufficient for all who will avail themselves of it, and who seek, in this appointed way, to return to God—sufficient for washing away guilt of deepest dye, and corruption of darkest stain. This, taken along with the undoubted right which God has to say to the sinner—not merely graciously, and in the way of a free permission, but authoritatively, in the way of a peremptory command—return, repent, believe—is enough to shut the sinner up to the necessity of complying with the call; and if we add, what has already been explained, the insight given into the character and heart of God—into the intensity of his longing desire to see every sinner return, and to embrace every sinner returning—what can be wanting,

so far as argument, or motive, or warrant is concerned, to bring the prodigal again, in relenting contrition, to his Father, and the rebel, in new-born allegiance, to his Lord?

2. No sinner, before believing, is entitled to stipulate for any information on the subject either of the extent or of the sufficiency of the atonement, beyond the assurance that it will suffice for him, if he will make use of it. To raise a question as to what may be its aspect or bearing towards him, while he is yet rejecting it, and to insist on his having this question answered or settled, as a preliminary condition of his believing, is not only arrogant presumption, but mere infatuation; and to deal with any such question, as if it might occasion any scruple really embarrassing to an earnest soul, and really, therefore, deserving of pity—or as if the statement of Christ's dying for his people, and for them only, must be modified or qualified to meet it—is but fostering the presumption, and flattering the folly, of unbelief. Let the sovereign authority of God in the gospel call be asserted, and let the sinner be summoned, at his peril, to return to his allegiance; let him be certified, also, of the sufficiency of Christ's atoning death for all the purposes for which he can possibly need it, and the free and full welcome that awaits him with the Father—and what more has he a right to ask? “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show *them* his covenant.” To believers, accordingly, more insight may be given into the mind and purpose of God. But to let unbelievers imagine that they, while

yet in an attitude of rebellion, are entitled to have all things made plain; or that it is necessary to accommodate our statements respecting God's love to his elect, Christ's death for them, and the Spirit's witness in them, to the difficulties which may be started as to the precise relation of all these to the unconverted—difficulties which the unconverted man starts, while continuing in a state of sin, and which would vanish on the instant of his being converted, and so ceasing to sin—is really to bring down the sovereign Jehovah to the rank of a mere petitioner for man's favour, and the gospel to the level of a kind of bargaining and trafficking with presumptuous offenders. It is, in fact, to place salvation at the mere discretion of sinners—who may condescend to look at it, and, if all is to their mind, make trial of it; instead of bringing the guilty, at once and peremptorily, to the bar of an offended Judge, who does not relinquish the stern hold of his just sovereignty over them, even while, with melting love, he beseeches them, as a gracious Father, to be reconciled to himself. It is to be feared that the trumpet has sometimes, in this respect, given forth too feeble and hesitating a sound, when a higher tone might have been more constraining in its influence over the heart, as well as more cogent and commanding in its appeal to the conscience.

3. But, further, it might be shown, that even if men had more information on the point in question, it would not help them to believe. For faith is not the belief of an express proposition defining the precise relation of Christ's death to the elect, or to men

in general, or to the individual in particular; but it is “the receiving and resting upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation, as he is freely offered in the gospel.” Thus, even the revelation of the decree of election, and of my name in it, would not materially help me in believing, and, at all events, would not produce faith; for it is not the knowledge or belief of a certain fact respecting the bearing of Christ’s death on me, that saves me, but my trust in him as the way to the Father. Still less could it avail me to know with the utmost possible exactness, and to be able to put into the most precise categorical proposition, the exact relation or connection between the death of Christ and men at large, including the non-elect—since, after all, the knowledge of that fact, and the belief of that proposition, would not advance me, by a single foot-step, towards that faith which is neither mere knowledge nor bare belief, but a hearty acquiescence in God’s proposals, and acceptance of God’s gift, and reliance on his faithful promises, for all the benefits of salvation, unto everlasting life.

If any deem it worth while to look into the address delivered at the close of the bicentenary meeting, or the portion of it bearing upon this subject, they will see that this is substantially the view there indicated. The object, on that occasion, was, to illustrate the harmony of truth, and to show, in reference to all the complex doctrines of our Confession—how an error, however trivial, in one part of the system, vitiates the whole. The instance selected was Faith, and particularly the view held by those who make faith a

simple act of the understanding—the intellectual apprehension and belief of the truth. Now, it was then observed, right or wrong, as a consequence of that view of faith, that it forces us to express in the shape of a definite and exact proposition the relation of Christ's death to those who are called to believe (*i. e.*, to mankind at large); and so to frame a sense in which it may be said that Christ died for all men, and in which, therefore, every sinner may be at once and summarily required to believe that Christ died for him; a sense, however, after all, falling short of that in which the believer does actually, upon his believing, come to apprehend and appropriate Christ, as his surety, according to the full meaning of this language of appropriation: "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. ii. 20.) On the other hand, it was argued, that the more simple view of faith, which seems to be sanctioned by our standards, supersedes the necessity of any such definition, since it makes faith consist, not in the belief of any definite* proposition at all, but in the committing of the soul, and the soul's interests for eternity, to a divine person. For such a faith, it is indispensable to know the truth concerning Christ's death, as a manifestation of the Father's character, and as the way to the Father's fellowship. But as to any more minute information, respecting the relation of Christ's death to the world while yet unbelieving, not only has Holy Scripture withheld such information, but even if it

* See Appendix D.

were granted, it would avail nothing to understand and admit it. The real belief of the truth is independent of it altogether; and, in fact, for any practical purposes connected with the sinner's actual return to God, it would be alike impertinent were he to ask, and useless were he to receive it. The reasons of this opinion have now been briefly stated.

Having been reluctantly compelled to enter upon the subject, we almost regret being obliged to leave it, without some further observations, especially with a view to trace the connection between erroneous or imperfect views on the subject of the atonement, and inadequate apprehensions of the divine sovereignty—human depravity and impotency—the work of the Spirit—the origin and nature of saving faith—the perseverance of the saints—their assurance of salvation, and other kindred doctrines. But, for the present, we must abstain.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREE CHURCH MAGAZINE."

Edinburgh, January 9, 1845.

MY DEAR SIR,—While I cannot think of using your periodical as the vehicle for carrying on any controversy personal to myself, I believe you expect me to furnish one or two papers on some of the topics indicated at the close of my article in your last Number. I would be understood as attempting to discuss, not so much the extent of the atonement, as its nature, fulness, and perfection; together with the sufficiency and certainty of the salvation which is inseparably and infallibly connected with it.—I am yours very truly,

ROB. S. CANDLISH.

CHAPTER II.

It may be necessary to recapitulate some of the points brought out in the former paper; and, accordingly, the following propositions may be taken as embodying the substance of the statements then made, respecting the bearing of Christ's work, or rather of the publication of it, on the world at large. For it is to be observed that, let the design and efficacy of the work itself be ever so definite, the publication of it, being confessedly indefinite, cannot but affect materially the condition of all to whom it is made, as regards both their present duty and their ultimate responsibility. To say, as some do, that the atonement, if held to have been undertaken for a certain number, cannot be a demonstration of love to all, is to confound the secret with the revealed will of God. Were the parties, whether few or many, for whom it is undertaken, named in the proclamation of it, it could not be a demonstration of good-will to mankind generally, or to sinners indiscriminately as such. But, since what is revealed is simply the way of acceptance, or the principle on which God acts in justifying the ungodly, it

seems plain, that to whomsoever such a revelation comes, with names and numbers suppressed, it is, in its very nature, a revelation of love. Let it be granted that Christ's work, like Christ himself, is set forth "for judgment," for "the fall and rising again of many in Israel," for "a savour of life or of death;" and let it be granted, also, that the names and numbers of those to whom it is to be the one or the other respectively, are fixed in the very undertaking and accomplishment of the work; still, to each individual to whom it is presented, with the alternative announcement that it will certainly be to him either life or death, and with that alone, it necessarily must be a manifestation of grace. Any question that may be raised as to the divine rectitude and faithfulness in such a procedure, is really no other than the great and insoluble question, as to the combination of the divine will with the human, or the divine agency with that of man, in any work whatsoever. This difficulty remains on any supposition; and certainly, on the hypothesis of a general and universal design or intention in the atonement itself, coupled with a limited and special design in the application of it, or in the work of the Spirit making it effectual, the difficulty is not less than on the most rigid Calvinistic theory. No system but that of universal pardon, or universal salvation, cuts the knot; and no system admitting special grace, even approaches a solution of it. The truth is, we attempt what is presumptuous and vain, when we seek to vindicate the consistency and sincerity of God in the gospel call, by going beyond the assurance, that whosoever

will put him to the proof, will find him faithful. But, to return to the propositions in which the substance of the former paper may be embodied, they are these:—

1. The present dispensation of long-suffering patience towards the world at large, seems to stand connected with the work of Christ. That dispensation of forbearance is subservient to the dispensation of grace, and preparatory to the dispensation of judgment; and it is the fruit of Christ's mediation.

2. To all alike, the work of Christ is a manifestation of the divine character, as well as of the divine manner of dealing with sinners of mankind.

3. To all alike, it is a proof and pledge of the desire, if we may so speak, subsisting in the divine heart—a desire involved in the very nature of God, as originating such a plan of salvation at all, whatever, on grounds and reasons unknown to us, his decree, as to its extent, or its actual issue and result, may be—to see every sinner return to himself, and to welcome every one so returning.

4. To every individual it brings home the divine claim of sovereign and supreme authority. It is an appeal to conscience. Whether the sinner is to be satisfied, on all points, or not, before believing, the gospel proceeds on the principle that God has a right to demand submission and allegiance to himself; and that conscience must recognise that right.

5. To every one who hears the gospel, assurance is given of the full and infinite sufficiency of Christ's work for any, and for all, who will come unto him. The dignity of his person, the merit of his obedience, and the value of his death, as a propitiation, secure this.

6. Saving faith—not being the mere belief of any definite propositions, far less of any that are indefinite, but union with a person, and reliance on a person, even Christ—requires nothing beforehand as the ground and warrant of its exercise, beyond the apprehension of these two precise and unequivocal truths:—1. That God is entitled to command the sinner's return to himself; and, 2. That the sinner, returning, is sure of a sufficient salvation. No additional information is necessary; nor would it be of any use.

We request the readers of this paper to peruse again, along with the above summary, the whole of our former article. And now, leaving, in the meantime, the view of the subject which has been first forced upon us, we shall endeavour to present it in a somewhat different light.

It may be useful, in such a case, to apply a kind of practical and experimental test, of which this question seems very particularly to admit. For we are deeply and solemnly persuaded, that the instant we begin to conceive of Christ's work, as undertaken and accomplished for any but those actually saved, under whatever vague phraseology of a general reference, or general relations, this may be done, we altogether change the nature and character of that work, so that it ceases to be a work of substitution, properly so called at all—we subvert the whole doctrine of imputation, whether of the individual sinner's guilt to Christ, or of Christ's righteousness to him—we materially modify the principle on which faith is held to

justify and save us, making it not the instrument of vital union to Christ, but a work, or condition, supplementary to his work—we insensibly incline to an inadequate feeling of the utter impotency, and just condemnation of the sinner; and, above all, we sadly detract from the completeness and certainty of the salvation that is in Christ. It is chiefly on this last aspect of the subject that our observations are at present to be made.

And, in this view, we remark, that the practical value or importance of this doctrine, respecting the work of Christ, as undertaken for those only, in regard to whom it is finally and savingly effectual, may be illustrated by tracing the progress of an awakened soul towards assurance of salvation; from the first feeling of *desiderium*, or the apprehension which such a soul has of what it really needs—through the successive stages of its “first love,” or fresh and childlike simplicity of faith—its subsequent trials and difficulties, even verging on despair—and its matured and experimental confidence—onwards and upwards to that infallible certainty of hope which maketh not ashamed. This progress, accordingly, it may be interesting to attempt to trace, at least in its commencing stage.

Let it be considered, then, what it is that the awakened soul really needs, and feels itself to need—what is its *desiderium*? And here, without hesitation, we reply, that what such a soul desiderates, is not a general or universal redemption, which must necessarily be contingent and doubtful—but one that is par-

ticular, and therefore certain. On this point we appeal to the experience, not only of those who are converted, but of all who have ever been conscious, or who now are conscious of any inward movements at all, tending in the direction of conversion. Were you ever aware of any spiritual awakening in your consciences and hearts, without the instinctive conviction, that as regarded both the end to be attained and the method of attaining it, what you needed—what alone you cared for, and could no longer do without—was not an interest in some kind of general deliverance, or some bare chance and opportunity of deliverance, common to all, but an interest in a real and actual salvation, such as, you feel, must be peculiar to God's own people? "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance." (Ps. cvi. 4, 5.) The very anxieties and perplexities of an awakened soul turn upon this particular sense of need.

In fact, there are but two ways in which, otherwise, the sinner's case, when at all realized, can be met—the one leaning to the Popish, the other to the Pelagian, error—yet both of them proceeding on the same idea of the divine work of redemption being left to be supplemented, whether as to its accomplishment or as to its application, by a priestly ministry in the hands of the Church, or by some effort of spontaneous will, or some attainment of righteousness, on the part of the individual. For both of these

systems agree in this, that they make the plan of salvation contingent and conditional; they would have it to be a sort of *panacea*, or universal medicine, to be in the possession, under the control, and at the disposal, either of the Church and priesthood, as dispensers of it, or of all and sundry, as qualified to administer it to themselves. The balm that is in Gilead is thus to be taken and used, apart from the Physician that is there. The remedy proposed being, in itself, of general, nay, of universal, applicability, inasmuch as it is fitted for every form and every measure of disease, is to be distributed and rendered actually effectual, either on the principle of a close spiritual corporation and ecclesiastical monopoly, the Church being recognised as having the sole key of this divine dispensary; or on the principle, or the hap-hazard, of absolute free trade, every man being left to be his own mediciner. Thus, it is but one great gigantic error, at bottom, which raises itself against the truth of God; whether it be the priesthood, with its mystical and sacramental charms—or the individual will of fallen man, with its supposed freedom, power, and ability of choice—that is regarded as dealing with the divinely ordained and divinely accomplished salvation, so as to effect, or to determine, or in any way to regulate, its particular application. It is the grand question, Whether I am to possess God's salvation, or God's salvation is to possess me? whether I am to have God in my power, and at my disposal, or God is to have me? whether the Creator is to place himself under the control of the creature, or the creature is

to submit to the Creator? whether man is to make use of God, or God is to reign over man? And how intimately the believer's confidence, as well as his high and holy calling, is bound up with a right answer to this question, let the apostle's phraseology testify, when he represents himself, not as apprehending, but as "apprehended of Christ Jesus"—caught and laid hold of by him (Phil. iii. 12); and when he appeals to his fellow-Christians as "having known God, or rather" (as if correcting himself) "being known of God." (Gal. iv. 9.)

For to this it must ultimately come; as every awakened sinner feels, whether he may be able to put his feeling into any definite expression or not. For, as the process of earnest thought and deep exercise of soul in the things of God goes on, the systems and forms of religion, which once appeared sufficient, whether more or less ecclesiastical, or more or less rationalistic, become wholly unsatisfactory and distasteful. Once, it might not be difficult for the sinner to content himself with a Pelagian, or semi-Pelagian notion of his being at liberty, and having power, to use the promises of the gospel as a remedy for the disorders of his nature and the ills of life, and to mould his character according to its precepts. Or, he might graft on this notion some Popish, or semi-Popish confidence in the Church's ritual and observances. And so he might have a fair-weather religion, with not a little apparent fervour, and with not a little fruit, which looked well enough, and served his purpose well enough, while his sky was clear and his heart

was whole. But when experience of another kind comes—when he sees the wind boisterous, and is afraid, and begins to sink—ah! then, it is not his laying hold of Christ, with his own withered arm, or through the Church's treacherous mediation, that will save him; but his being powerfully caught and laid hold of by Christ himself; and he feels this when he cries: "Lord, save me, I perish;" and immediately Jesus stretches forth his hand to catch him, with a look and a word of tender reproach: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Now, a sinner thus apprehended, does not find his case at all met, or the *desideratum* or felt want of his soul supplied, or its *desiderium* or longing desire satisfied, by either of the two contrivances, which they, who would be wiser than God, and would have a simpler gospel than that of Christ, are apt to propose; as either—*first*, By an extension of the plan of salvation, so as to make it comprehend and embrace others besides the individuals actually saved; or, *secondly*, By an exaggeration of the power and ability of individual sinners, at their own discretion, to avail themselves of the remedy provided. For these are the two expedients, the Arminian and the Pelagian, invented by human wisdom, to meet this case.

For, as to the *first*—with which, in this inquiry, we are chiefly concerned—tell such a one of a universal redemption—an atonement or propitiation made for all—a pardon or life purchased for all—and ask him, Is it this that you want? is it this that you feel yourself urgently and indispensably and immediately

to need ? It is true that, in a certain stage of his experience, this doctrine of an unlimited atonement may seem to remove a difficulty, as to the earnest cordiality of the call or invitation on the part of God, and the warrant for compliance with it on the part of the sinner ; and thus, it may contribute, in his apprehension, to facilitate the decisive step, or, as it were, the leap, not indeed in the dark, but yet at a venture, and in faith, by which he is to pass over the great gulf, and effect his clear and unequivocal transition from a state of nature to a state of grace. Such is the purpose which this notion seems to serve, in the system of those, who, being better preachers, as we are apt to think, than theologians—(and what can be higher praise, as applicable to a Church like that of the Wesleyan Methodists, forced into existence and energy by a universal deadness, and having time for nothing but instant and reviving action ?)—unite with the doctrine of a universal atonement or general redemption, those other doctrines, of particular personal election, on the one hand, and the efficacious and sovereign work of the Spirit, in order to faith, and in believing, on the other.* They think they find, in this theory of redemption, a stepping-stone to that personal appropriation of the blessings of saving grace, which they rightly hold to be incumbent, as a duty, on every hearer of the gospel, and to be involved in the acceptance of the gospel call. But the assistance, which their idea of a universal atonement affords, is, after all, more apparent than real. In point of fact, to a sinner situated as we

* See Appendix E.

are now supposing, it is the universal, unlimited, strait, and imperative command to believe, coupled with the unrestricted, unconditional, free, full, unequivocal, and infallible assurance, that whosoever believeth will be saved—which, after all, does the thing—which gets him over the difficulty, and lands him in peace and enlargement of heart—not any conception, either of a universal purchase, or a universal application, of the benefits which he covets and grasps.

Put it to such a sinner, whose conscience within him being thus quickened, and undergoing the pangs of the new birth, is scarcely pacified, and with difficulty made to rest: Do you look to Jesus, and believe on him, or long to believe on him, for no more special and specific blessings than what are common to all for whom you imagine that he died? Is it for nothing more sure and certain—more complete and full—in the way of salvation, that you seek an interest in Christ, and venture timidly and fearfully to hope that you have obtained, at least, as it were, a first instalment, or infestment and investiture in it? Ah, no! he will reply. For such a redemption, common to me with the lost and damned, it were little worth my while to believe in Jesus. If I am to believe in him at all, it must be for a great deal more than this.

Nor will it be of any avail here to introduce the scheme of a double sense, as if the belief that Christ died for me, in some sense in which he equally died for the traitor Judas, could at all help me to believe in him, as dying to make such propitiation for sin,

and purchase such a salvation, as must, confessedly, be restricted to them that are "chosen, and called, and faithful." Universal redemption, universal atonement, universal pardon, are ideas or words that may seem to make the sinner's appropriation of Christ to himself, and his use of Christ for all the purposes of his own spiritual life, a very easy and simple thing. But if you exclude universal salvation, this apparent facility becomes merely imaginary and delusive; for still, what is needed is the appropriation of Christ, not as standing in a relation, and doing a work, common to all, the lost as well as the saved, but as standing in a relation, and doing a work, peculiar to them that believe. The really awakened and enlightened soul will scarcely be manœuvred into peace by any such ambidextrous juggle or ambiguity as this. Ask such a one what he needs, what he wants, what he now feels that he cannot dispense with, or do without? He will tell you that it is not a redemption consistent with his being after all cast into hell, but a redemption real and actual, full, finished, and perfect, infallibly certain, and irrevocably secure. Nay, but you say to him, this redemption with which you have to do, is, in one view, common to all, and, in another, peculiar to those actually saved; and it is the former general aspect of it that you are first to take in, with a view to your apprehending the other, which is more special. But what is it that makes the difference, I ask—that translates me from the position of one generally interested, according to some vague and undefined sense, along with mankind at large, in the redemption pur-

chased by Christ, to that of one specially and actually redeemed? My acceptance of the redemption, you reply. But of what redemption? It cannot be my acceptance of real and complete redemption; for what is presented to me as the object of my faith—as that which I am to believe—is the fact of a general redemption, common to me with Judas. It must be, therefore, my acceptance of something which, as it is presented to my acceptance, is very far short of complete redemption, and is made up to what is needed by my act in accepting it. Ah! then, after all, it is a salvation by works, at least in part—a salvation only partially accomplished by Christ, to be supplemented by those to whom it is offered; conditional, therefore, and contingent on something on the part of the sinner, call it faith or what you will, that is to be not merely the hand laying hold of a finished work, but an additional stroke needed to finish it. (Gal. ii.)

Nor does it help the matter to tell me that this also is the work of God—this faith being wrought in me by the Holy Ghost. Still it is a different work from that of Christ, and must be associated with it, not in the way of appropriating, but in the way of supplementing it. For, in this view, the work of the Spirit must become necessarily *objective*, along with the work of Christ, instead of being merely *subjective*; and the Spirit must speak of himself, as well as testify of Christ. He must reveal to me, as the ground and warrant of my confidence, not merely the work of Christ, but his own work in addition. For as, on this supposition, the work of Christ purchases nothing more

than salvability for all, and it is the work of the Spirit which turns that common salvability into actual salvation, what I am to believe in for salvation is not the work of Christ alone, but, conjointly, Christ's work for sinners generally, and the Spirit's work in me individually. Hence a looking to inward signs, and leaning on inward experience; a walking, in short, by sense, rather than by faith. For this is the worst effect of the notion of which we are speaking, namely, that of the atonement being general and universal, connected with a strict view of regeneration, or of faith being the gift and work of the Holy Ghost. It almost necessarily leads those who hold it to place the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit on the same footing, as making up between them the ground, and warrant, and foundation of confidence; so that the sinner is to look to, and rest on, not Christ's work alone, but his and the Spirit's together. But it is a great scriptural truth that, in the exercise of saving faith, Christ's work alone is *objective*, and the Spirit's wholly *subjective*; or, in other words, that while the Spirit is the author of faith, Christ is its only object. And if so, it must be Christ, as securing, by his death, a full, finished, complete, and everlasting salvation.

It is for this, and nothing short of this, that the awakened and enlightened sinner cares to believe in Christ at all. He longs to appropriate Christ. But it is Christ as not a possible, but an actual Saviour, that he does long to appropriate; Christ as having purchased a complete salvation; a salvation complete and sure, irrespective of his own act of appropriating

it, or of the work of the Spirit by which he is persuaded and enabled to do so. True it is that he may experience difficulty in thus appropriating Christ and his salvation; he may have scruples, and doubts, and misgivings manifold, in bringing himself to realize anything like a personal interest in the love and the death of Jesus. But will it meet his case to widen to the very utmost the extent of Christ's work, and to represent it as designed and intended, undertaken and accomplished, for all, even the lost? Do you not, in proportion as you thus widen its extent, limit and diminish its real efficacy, and in consequence, also, the actual amount of benefit implied in it? You say to the broken-hearted anxious inquirer, that he may appropriate this redemption as a redemption purchased for all. Ah! then, it becomes a redemption scarcely worth the appropriating. Nay, you rejoin, it is very precious; for, when accompanied by the work of the Holy Ghost, it becomes a great deal more than redemption common to all; it becomes redemption special and peculiar to the saved. Be it so. But do you not thus instantly set the inquiring sinner on putting the two works—that of Christ and that of the Holy Ghost—together, as constituting together the ground of his hope?—whereas the Spirit himself would not have his own work to be, in any degree or in any sense, either the object, or the ground, or the reason, or the warrant, of faith at all, but only and exclusively the finished work and sure word of Christ.

The truth is, what is needed to meet such a case, is a complete salvation freely offered. The difficulty

in question, so far as it is to be overcome by argument or reason at all, or by considerations addressed to the understanding, is to be got over by pressing the peremptory gospel call to believe, and the positive gospel assurance, of a cordial welcome to all that will believe. That call and that assurance are universal, unrestricted, unreserved.

But the call must be a call to the sinner to submit himself to the righteousness of God, or the work of Christ, as by itself, alone, justifying the ungodly; and the assurance must be an assurance that an interest in Christ immediately and necessarily carries with it the full possession of all saving blessings; otherwise, if it be not the very nature of the atonement itself, or its exact design and inherent efficacy, that connects with it a sure and perfect salvation—but something superadded to, or supervening upon, the atonement, to qualify, as it were, or to complete it—then, it is on that something, after all, whatever it may be, that the sinner is to fix his eye and rest his hope, and not really on the atonement, which, without it, is to him unmeaning and unprofitable.

Thus, *in the first place*, there are some who say that, on the part of God, it is a covenant transaction alone that secures the actual salvation of a certain portion of mankind, in connection with the atonement; which, in itself, does no more than make the salvation of any, and of all, possible. They represent the Son as undertaking his work, on the condition of its being infallibly rendered effectual on behalf of a given number; and they seem to hold that it is this

alone which imparts to that work, anything like a more special reference to that given number than it has to the world at large. It is plain that this view touches very deeply the nature of the work of Christ. We are accustomed to believe that in the covenant transaction between the Father and the Son, an elect people being given to Christ, he did, in their room, and as their surety, undertake and accomplish a work which, from its very nature, as a work of satisfaction and substitution, insured infallibly their complete salvation. But that other theory makes the whole peculiarity of Christ's relation to his people turn, not on the essential nature of his work on their behalf, but on the terms which he made with the Father; so that, in fact, it comes to this, that Christ really has not done more for them than for others; although, by the divine arrangements regarding it, what he has done is to be rendered effectual for their salvation, and not for that of others.

And hence, it follows, *secondly*, that, on the part of the sinner himself who is called to receive salvation, there must be a tendency to have his attention turned, not to Christ's work, as, from its very nature, a sure and sufficient ground of hope, but to those arrangements which define and determine its otherwise unlimited efficacy, in so far as these are made known. And here the great practical evil comes out. The death of Christ, or his work of atonement, is viewed very much as an expedient for getting over a difficulty that had occurred in the government of God, in reference to the negotiating of a treaty of reconciliation

with the guilty; it is a sort of *coup-d'état*, a measure of high and heavenly policy, for upholding generally the authority of law and justice in the universe. But that purpose being served, it may now be put very much in the background, excepting only in so far as it is a manifestation of the divine character, which it must always be right to admire; for, the hitch or crisis that demanded such an interposition being adjusted, the door is open for a negotiation of peace between God and his guilty creatures of mankind, in which reference may, indeed, be made to the atonement—but rather as if it made way for reconciliation, than as if it actually procured it.

Is not this like what Paul calls “another gospel?” To preach, or proclaim, salvation *through* Christ, is a different thing from proclaiming salvation *IN* Christ. I go to the crowd of criminals, shut up in prison, under sentence of death; and my message is, not that in consequence of Christ’s death I have now to offer to them all liberty to go out free; but that Christ himself is there, even at the door, in whom, if they will but apply to him, they will find one who can meet every accusation against them, and enrich them with every blessing. I refer them and point them to him alone; and whatever difficulties may remain as to their obtaining an interest in Christ, I am bound to assure them that this is all they have to care for; even that they may win Christ, and be found in him. In a word, I present to them, not a general amnesty, or vague and indefinite, gaol-delivery, proceeding upon the transaction which Christ finished upon Cal-

vary—but Christ himself, and him crucified, a present Saviour now, as well as then—having in his hand a special pardon and special grace for every one who will resort to him—and nothing for any who will not.

The Pelagian, or semi-Pelagian, expedient for meeting the sinner's case, by exaggerating his natural ability to believe, will fall to be afterwards considered. In the meantime, it would appear that little is gained, in the way of facilitating his acceptance of Christ, by any extension of the design and efficacy of Christ's work beyond those actually saved, or any idea of a general aspect or reference in his atonement.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREE CHURCH MAGAZINE."

Edinburgh, February 10, 1845.

MY DEAR SIR,—I fear you and your readers may have cause to regret the letting in of what threatens to be somewhat too copious a stream of matter; for I have allowed myself to be led on greatly beyond my original intention, which was merely to explain a sentence or two in my bicentenary speech, of which I understood some use had been made, not exactly according to my mind. My apology is to be found, partly in the vast importance of the subject, especially in present circumstances, and partly in the manner in which I have endeavoured to treat it, without any of the personalities of controversy, as an abstract theological question—abstract, I mean, not in the sense of its being theoretical as opposed to practical—for I hold it to be most vitally practical—but in the sense of its being considered apart from the peculiarities of particular cases and individual disputants. My hope is, that the presenting of the subject in this manner may tend, by God's blessing, to settle some minds, whose calm convictions may be in danger of being disturbed by the excitement of polemical warfare.

In the present paper, I have wandered somewhat from the line indicated in my former article; but the digression, as I trust I may afterwards show, and, as an accurate thinker will himself perceive, is more apparent than real. The observations I make may seem also to some, to be too much of a general nature, and to savour too much of human reasoning and metaphysical discussion, instead of being exclusively scriptural. In explanation, I would say, *first*, That I by no means shrink from a minute and particular examination of Scripture texts and passages, which I admit, or rather maintain, to be the safe and legitimate mode of ascertaining what the Lord saith; but, *secondly*, That the interpretation of such texts and passages, and the settlement of the controversy by means of them, will, for the most part, be found ultimately to turn on certain general considerations, such as those which I have sought to bring forward. In the revival of these discussions, in our day, this seems to have been very generally felt and acknowledged.—I am, &c.

ROB. S. CANDLISH.

CHAPTER III.

THE reasons which, as it would appear, chiefly weigh with those who advocate the theory of a "general reference," or "general relations," in the atonement, reaching beyond the individuals actually saved by it, are, on the one hand, a desire to explain and establish the consistency of God in the universal call of the gospel; and, on the other, an extreme anxiety to facilitate the sinner's compliance with that call. The design is, in so far, worthy of commendation, and the motive good—to justify to all men the divine procedure, and to leave all men without apology or excuse.

At the same time, it may be doubted if this can ever be altogether a becoming or safe point of view from which to contemplate the plan of saving mercy; since it almost inevitably leads to our regarding it rather in the light of what seems due to man, than in the light of what is due to God. It is remarkable, accordingly, that Holy Scripture rarely, if ever, concerns itself with these aspects of the great fact or truth which is its subject—the fact and truth of redemption. The Bible

is not careful to vindicate the ways of God to man, or to make them all so smooth and plain that there shall be no stumbling-block in them for those who will stumble. It represents these ways, indeed, as such, that the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err in them; but it represents them also as such, that they who turn aside may think themselves entitled to complain of their narrowness, and of the straitness of the gate that leads into them. In point of fact, the Bible, in all that it reveals as to the adjustment of the relation between the God of love and his guilty creatures, proceeds much more on the ground of what God claims as his own proper right, than on any notion of what man may consider due to him. It stands much on God's high prerogative—his irresistible power and unquestionable sovereignty; and though it does leave men really without excuse before God, it does not leave them without excuses to themselves. This, indeed, is one chief evidence of the divine authority of the Bible, as well as of the divinity of that blessed Saviour of whom it testifies, that, in the whole system of truth which it contains—the truth as it is in Him—it maintains so lofty and uncompromising a tone of loyalty and allegiance to God, and shows so much more anxiety to silence and subdue man, than (at least beforehand) to satisfy him. “Let God be true, and every man a liar. Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Let every mouth be stopped. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still. Be still, and know that I am God. He that doeth my will shall

know of the doctrine." The whole strain of the divine Word, and especially of the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus, is to this effect. "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." (1 Cor. i. 18-24.)

It were well if, in this respect, the disciple did not seek to be above his Master. Let the ambassadors and messengers of the King leave it to himself to vindicate his own ways to all to whom he cares to vindicate them (Matt. xii. 25); and let them take to themselves the humbler function of handing over inquirers to him for satisfaction, instead of offering to make all that concerns him plain to them—even before they are in the attitude of Mary, sitting at his feet, and hearing his word. This humiliation on the part of his ministers is their best credential; for it is thus that, like Jesus himself, they speak as having authority.

But with reference, more particularly, to the matter in hand, let the real value be ascertained of the two reasons already assigned for that relaxation, which some propose, of the strict and stern Calvinism of our evangelical divines.

The *first* relates to God and the supposed necessity of vindicating his sincerity and good faith, in connection with the universality of the gospel offer. Now, without dwelling on the obvious consideration that this whole matter might be left to God himself; inas-

Math. XI. 2

much as we may most emphatically and unequivocally assure all sinners, without exception, that none ever put him to the proof, by accepting, or desiring to accept, his offer, and found him fail—and none ever will;—let it be asked, What is the actual import of the expedient proposed for this end?

It is obvious, *in the first place*, that it merely shifts the difficulty. In fact, of all theories the most inconsistent is that of a universal atonement, or an atonement with a “general reference” to all mankind, taken along with a purpose and provision of special grace, in regard to its application. To say that, in a sense, Christ died for all, but that in so dying for all, he stipulated, in covenant, with the everlasting Father, that the Spirit, without whose agency his death would be effectual for the salvation of none, should be given infallibly to a certain number, and to them alone—this is so manifest an evasion of the real perplexity, so shifting and sandy a refuge, that none can long continue to occupy such a position. Accordingly, it has been almost invariably found, that the theory halts, and is lame, until the doctrine even of a special purpose and special grace in the application of the remedy is abandoned, as well as that of a limited design in the work itself. Nay, rightly followed out, it can scarcely stop short, either, *on the one hand*, of a denial of all that is essential to the idea of an atonement, as a true substitution of the innocent in the room of the guilty, or, *on the other*, of universal pardon, or the universal salvation of all mankind. Certainly, the middle stage or intermediate position, which would

combine a general reference in the atonement itself, with a limited purpose, from all eternity, in its application—the notion, in short, of Christ's work being more extensive than that of the Spirit rendering it effectual—will not go far to satisfy any who are inclined to raise a question as to the honesty of the gospel offer; for how is it more easy to explain the universal offer of salvation on the footing of a general atonement, with a particular purpose of application—than the universal offer of salvation as connected with an atonement, from its very nature and efficacy restricted indeed, but on that very account, and by that very restriction, securing the salvation offered, and rendering it certain, to all who are made willing to receive it?

For the real question here is not how the difficulty is to be explained, but where it is to be allowed to rest. It is admitted that there is a knot which cannot be unloosed—an arrangement, or ordinance, or decree, which must be resolved into an exercise of the divine sovereignty, of which no account is given to us. The only question is, Where is it to be placed? Is this restriction, or limitation of the plan of mercy, which constitutes the real perplexity, to be introduced between the work of Christ purchasing redemption, and the work of the Spirit applying it? With all deference, this seems the worst of all niches in which to hide it; for thus situated, it dishonours either the Spirit's work, or Christ's—the Spirit's, if we ask, Why should not that blessed agent give more wide and universal effect to the general atonement of Christ?—

or Christ's, if we ask, Why should not that infinitely meritorious and precious atonement of his, having reference, as it is alleged, in its own nature, to all, avail to purchase, for all, the needful supplement of the gift of the Spirit? The truth is, there are but two consistent landing-places for this high mystery which has been so much tossed and bandied to and fro—the one at a point prior, in the order of nature, to both of these works; the other at a point subsequent and posterior to both. Or, in other words, the reason of this limitation must be sought, either in the purpose of God's will, going before both the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit, and defining both, or in the power (*arbitrium*) of man's will coming after both of these works, and restricting what God has left general. This is the real alternative; and this is the danger to be apprehended from any attempt to shift the difficulty from the former position, that it almost infallibly leads, sooner or later, to an adoption of the latter. Then we have a general love of the Father, a general work of the Son, and a general influence of the Spirit, all depending on the power of man's will for their fruit and efficacy. Is it not better to regard the will of the Eternal Father, as the source, alike, and the limit, of the whole plan; and to make both the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit commensurate with that will, which they exactly fulfil? Then the whole difficulty is resolved into the sovereignty and mere good pleasure of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and the question, Why is it not God's good pleasure to save all men, or to save more than are actually em-

braced in the plan? is met by the question, Why is it his good pleasure to save any? *

But *secondly*, this is not all. For, in our anxiety to avoid a supposed appearance of insincerity, on the part of God, in one direction, there is danger of incurring risk in another. By all means let there be an honest offer of the gospel, it is said. Surely: but let it be honest in respect of what is offered, as well as in respect of those to whom it is offered. Let God be true to those who accept the offer, though all else should make him a liar. Now, consider what they who are in Christ are said, according to Scripture, and on the terms of the gospel offer, to possess. Is it anything short of a real and personal substitution of Christ in their room and stead, as their representative and surety, in fulfilling all their obligations, and undertaking and meeting all their liabilities, under the law?—such a substitution as insures that, in consequence of it, they, by a legal right, and in terms of the law which he, being constituted their covenant head, magnified and made honourable, are now free from blame, and being justified, are invested with a title to life, and everlastingly saved? This is what was presented to them, and pressed on their acceptance, before they believed. It was for this that they believed; and it was this which, on believing, they obtained—Christ, namely, not as standing in a vague and undefined relation to all men, but Christ, as standing in a special relation to them, as their substitute, who took their place under the law, and so was made sin for them, that their

* See Appendix F.

condemnation thereafter would have been, and would be, unrighteous and impossible. Let the passages of Scripture be fairly weighed which describe what Christ is to his people (such passages as these: Eph. i. 7; Rom. viii. 1; Col. ii. 10; Gal. iii. 13; 2 Cor. v. 21, and innumerable other texts of the same general class), and then, let it be asked, In what character is he set forth and offered to sinners of mankind generally and universally, and proposed to their belief, and pressed on their acceptance? Is it not in the character which he sustains to his own people, and which he can sustain to none other—the character of a real and actual substitute in their room and stead? Is this an honest offer—honest, as regards not only the parties to whom it is made, but the portion of good which it contains? Honest! Nay, the offer, the proposal, the gift, of what is implied in a general atonement may be, and must be, delusive; for it is the offer of what does not meet the sinner's case. But “it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came to *save* sinners, even the chief”—to save them, by the actual substitution of himself in their stead, under the law which they have broken, and by the actual fulfilment of all the righteousness of the law, and the endurance of its penalty, on their behalf.

In regard, again, to the *second* reason which weighs with some who object to any limitation or restriction of the plan of saving mercy, or, at least, to such limitation and restriction as is implied in the doctrine, that the whole work of Christ was undertaken and accomplished for those actually and ultimately saved,

and for them alone—the supposed necessity of satisfying sinners themselves, on this point, with a view to facilitate their acceptance of the gospel call, or to leave them inexcusable in rejecting it—there are some practical considerations which may serve to show the danger of such an experiment. There is one, however, in particular, on which it appears important to enlarge. It is this—that the train of thought, or habit of mind, which this objection either indicates or fosters, seems to have an important bearing on the whole question of what it is that makes man accountable, and renders his condemnation just. In fact, it is very apt to derange or vitiate very seriously that most delicate of all the parts of our moral and spiritual frame—the sense or feeling of responsibility; and to countenance the impression which sinners are prone enough otherwise to take up, that, except upon a certain understanding, and certain conditions fitted to meet their own views, they ought not to be held, and cannot fairly be held, accountable before God at all.

This impression operates in various forms and degrees among men. In its worst extreme, it becomes the plea of Infidelity itself, leading to a denial of all accountability, properly so called, and all retributive justice or penal judgment. “I am so framed, and so situated,” says the Infidel, “that I have no fair chance, or fair play, in this mighty moral warfare, and so cannot fairly be made to answer for the issue. The child of impulse, and, to so large an extent, the creature of circumstances, I have not the liberty or power essential to my contending with any hope of

success. If I am to engage in this life-struggle, and peril my all on its issue, give me a better constitution, and more equitable or more favourable terms." To this demand of the Infidel, what reply can be given, beyond an appeal to his own consciousness and his own conscience?—his consciousness, as testifying that he sins wilfully—his conscience, as registering, even in spite of all his sophistry, the just sentence of condemnation. The same tendency is seen among many, who, stopping short of absolute Infidelity, have, nevertheless, but very vague and inadequate apprehensions of the principles and sanctions of the divine government. They take, as they say, a rational and moderate view of human nature and human life, and look with an indulgent eye, as they allege the great Creator himself must do, on a race of frail and fallible mortals, who could scarcely be expected to be much better than they are, and who may, in all good sense and good feeling, claim a certain measure of forbearance. They regard the sins, and follies, and crimes of men as misfortunes, rather than faults, and look on offenders as deserving rather to be pitied than to be blamed.

Now, we cannot help thinking that there is something of a similar tendency in the idea which we are combating—the idea, that is, of its being necessary to extend and stretch out the scheme of grace, with a view to satisfy men as to its application to them, and so to deepen their feeling of responsibility in dealing with it. It tends to shift, or transfer, the ground of responsibility too much away from the moral to the intellectual part of our nature. It is

true, indeed, that the sense of responsibility must be intelligent as well as conscientious; but all that the understanding is entitled to demand is, that it shall be satisfied on these two points, namely, *first*, That what is duty, in the matter on hand, is clear; and, *secondly*, That it is reasonable; or, in other words, that there is no reason against, but every reason for it. These preliminaries being settled, the understanding inquires no further, but at once hands the affair over to the department of the conscience, and lays the imperative and indispensable obligation upon that supreme and ultimate faculty of our moral nature. And all this is independent of any question of *will*, on the part either of the Being who claims, or of the party who owes, the duty—any question, that is, either regarding the purpose of God's will, or regarding the power of man's. Leave the burden of responsibility here, and all is safe. But it is most dangerous to give the slightest countenance to the idea, that any information respecting the purpose of God's will, or any communication of power to man's will, is to enter at all as an element or condition into this vital principle, or great fact, of accountability; or that man is entitled to stipulate, before consenting to hold himself responsible in any matter, that he shall have any knowledge of the intention of God, or any assurance of ability in himself; or anything whatever, in short, beyond the apprehension that this is his duty, and that it is altogether reasonable.

Thus, in dealing with the law, or covenant of works, the sense of guilt is wrought in the awakened sinner's

conscience, by the insight given him into the excellency and spirituality of the law, and the holiness, the reasonableness, and the benevolence of all its requirements. Nor is this sense of guilt at all affected by the sad experimental conviction, that he is himself so carnal, and so sold under sin, that he cannot do the things which he would—unless, indeed, it be, that its bitterness is not alleviated, but aggravated, by the melancholy discovery. (See Rom. vii. 7-25.) And so, also, in dealing with the gospel, the condemnation of unbelief, as a sin, rests altogether on the right which God has to demand the sinner's return to himself, and the reasonableness of that demand, arising out of the full and sufficient warrant with which he has furnished the sinner, and the evidence and assurance which he has given of his gracious willingness to receive him. And conviction of this sin of unbelief is wrought by the Holy Ghost, simply by his manifesting to the conscience the enormous impiety, infatuation, and ingratitude, which, in its very nature, unbelief involves, apart altogether from every other consideration, either as to the design of God in the gospel which it rejects, or as to the utter helplessness and impotency of man's will in rejecting it. On this subject a very confident appeal may be made to the experience of every deeply exercised soul. When the Spirit has been convincing you at any time of sin, because you believed not in Jesus (or believed not Jesus, for it is the same thing—John xvi. 9), was there any other thought present to your mind but that of the infinite unreasonableness, in every view of it, of your unbelief?

Had your feeling of guilt any reference at all to the purpose of God's will ; or was it not rather wholly concerned with the just authority of his government, as asserted in the gospel you had been disbelieving, and the infinite perfection of his character, as there so gloriously and attractively displayed ? Or did you raise any question as to your own power of will to believe, or your possession of effectual grace, as if that might modify your responsibility for not believing ? Nay, the very feeling of that impotency with which your whole nature has been smitten—with the thorough impression, moreover, that so far from being due to you, all help from above may be most justly withheld—only increases your distress ; and that, not in the way of transferring this inability to believe, out of the category of a sin, to be condemned, into that of a misfortune, to be complained of and deplored, but in the way of fastening down upon you, with even a deeper acknowledgment than ever of God's perfect equity, and your own inexcusable demerit and guilt, the sentence of judgment for the sin of unbelief.

Something like this, it is apprehended, is the course of the Spirit's work, and of the experience of the people of God, in reference to conviction of the sin of unbelief. But it is to be feared, that this true and solid ground on which guilt is to be brought home to the unbeliever's conscience, is apt to be not a little shaken by the jealousy which has always been entertained, by some, of special love in the accomplishment of Christ's work, and by others, of special love in its application. For it seems to be thought, that the

responsibility of the sinner for his unbelief, is at least rendered more obvious, more tangible, and more simple, when he is told of an unlimited atonement, and still more, when he is assured of an unlimited work or operation of the Spirit. The contrary, as has been said, seems to be the impression which a sound view of the nature of the case, and the constitution of man, is fitted to make. For the danger is, lest you thus substitute responsibility, for *continuing, under certain circumstances, in the state of unbelief*, instead of responsibility, for *the sin of unbelief itself*, and so, in point of fact, change the character of the responsibility altogether. For you almost inevitably lead the sinner to think, that but for the information which he obtains respecting God's grace, in the work of Christ, embracing all, and being common to all, himself among the number, he would be scarcely, or, at any rate, far less to be blamed, for not submitting and returning to God. And the next step is, that he considers himself entitled to insist on a knowledge of the purpose of God's will, and a removal of the impotency of his own, as necessary conditions of his accountability; which, in fact, goes far to make his conscience very easy, as to the guilt which his unbelief, in its very nature, implies, causing him to dwell exclusively on the aggravations which attach to it, in consequence of this supposed universal and unlimited grace. Now, the universality of the gospel *offer*, is an aggravation of the sin of unbelief, which it is important to take into account; or, rather, not properly an aggravation, but an essential ingredient

in its criminality; for it is that which establishes the perfect reasonableness of what is required of the sinner, and so leaves him without excuse. But, as to any of these other aggravations, which may be supposed likely to tell upon his conscience, the risk is that they operate rather as palliatives, and so conduce to a state of mind the most difficult, perhaps, of all its morbid experiences to be dealt with—the state, *namely*, in which unbelief is bewailed much as an evil, without any adequate sense of its guilt as a sin. It is but too common to hear one complaining, in doleful accents, that he cannot believe, and alleging, perhaps, the decree of election, and its kindred doctrines, as a difficulty in his way; and, in treating such a case, one is often tempted to enter into explanations, and to wish even that the obnoxious dogma were got rid of altogether. But, alas! however far we go in that direction, and whatever assurances we try to give of universal grace, the sufferer complains the more; his misfortune is the greater, that even under a universal scheme of mercy, and with a universal promise of the Spirit, he cannot believe. But let him cease to be a *patient*—to be soothed and sympathized with, and be viewed as a *criminal*—to be placed at the bar of that great God whose word of truth he is belying, whose authority he is defying, whose love he is refusing; then, in the Spirit's hands, he begins to feel what true responsibility is, and to be convinced of sin, because he believes not on Jesus. And then, as in the case of conviction of sin under the law, the sense of his own utter impotency—his inability to know, or

to believe, or to will, or to do, according to what God requires—taken along with the deep and solemn impression, that he has no claim at all upon God for the communication of any light or any power from on high—so far from alleviating the poignancy of his feeling of inexcusable guilt, fastens and rivets it more firmly in his inmost soul. In such an attitude, the Word of God, in the proclamation of the gospel, finds him little disposed to ask questions or raise difficulties, but rather ready, with all the simplicity of the early converts to Christianity—with whom this whole doctrine of sovereign and free grace was less an affair of the head, and more of the heart, than with us—to receive the Father's testimony concerning his Son, and, led by the Spirit, to return through the Son to the Father.

Other observations occur, bearing on this subject, and leading again into that train of reasoning, which was left unfinished in the former article. But this apparent digression has so swelled out, that both the time and the space at present available are exhausted. One remark, only, in closing, may be allowed; and it is this: that what seems chiefly to be deprecated in some of the views we are opposing, is their tendency to affect the doctrine of conversion or regeneration, and to convey the impression, that the understanding and belief of the truth of God, is an act to which a natural man is altogether, or at least partially, competent. This, however, would require fuller illustration than can now be given; and it may afterwards occur to be considered.

CHAPTER IV.

A DESIRE to facilitate the sinner's coming to Christ, and closing with Christ—to help him over the great gulf (which on this side of the grave, is to none impassable) that divides a state of reconciliation from a state of enmity—weighs with many who dislike the restriction or limitation of the work of Christ, and of the whole of his saving offices and relations, to the people actually, in the end, reconciled. Now, it might tend to remove, in part, such a feeling of repugnance, were it borne in mind that it is not at all *this feature* of the salvation of the gospel which is presented to the sinner, in the first instance, as the ground or warrant of his believing, and the motive or inducement for him to believe; but *another feature of it altogether*, which is not in the least affected by the former; the feature, namely, which that salvation exhibits, as in its nature suited, adapted, and applicable to the case of each individual sinner, and in its terms freely and unreservedly offered, and by an absolutely gratuitous grant or deed of gift, conveyed and made over to the acceptance of every individual sinner who

will have it. True, it may be said, all this liberality in the ostensible proclamation and front scene, as it were, is well; but there is the fatal contraction and drawing in, behind. Nay, we reply, there need be no reserve in the matter. The exclusive reference of the work of Christ to those actually saved by it may be, and must be, announced. But this does not hinder, either, on the one hand, the work being, in its very nature, such that each individual sinner may see and feel it to be what meets, and what alone can meet, his case; or, on the other hand, the terms on which an interest in it is bestowed being such, that each individual sinner may also see and feel it to be freely and fully within his reach, if he will but consent to lay hold of it.

We go further, however, on this point, and venture to add, that it is this very exclusiveness, so often complained of, which imparts to the work of Christ that character of special and pointed adaptation to his own case, which is so readily apprehended by every sinner truly sensible of his sin, and which makes the free offer of an interest in it so very precious and welcome; in so much, that if my soul be really groaning under the burden of sin—whatever difficulty I may feel in getting over the decree of election, or the necessity of the Spirit's agency in producing faith—I ought not to feel—and sinners so situated do not, we believe, usually feel—the pressure of any difficulty on the side of the work of Christ; but, on the contrary, I would not wish to have it more extended, lest it should cease to be what, on a first glance, and on the first awakening

of a desire towards it, it approved itself to be—namely, a complete remedy for all my soul's disease, through the substitution of Him who bears it all in my stead. The real truth would seem to be, that the universality so much in demand, and admitted to be so indispensable, is not the universality of an actual interest of any kind, in anything whatever that is Christ's, but the universality of a contingent or possible interest, of the most complete kind, in all that is his: and what I need to have said to me for my encouragement is, not that I actually already have something in Christ, but that having now nothing in him at all, I am freely invited, exhorted, and commanded, at once, to have Christ himself, and then in him to have, now and for ever, all things. In a word, the gospel assurance is, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth;" and what comes home to me as the crowning excellence of the gospel, is this very assurance which it conveys to me—not that there is something in Christ for all; but that there are all things in Christ for some—for believers, namely, and for me, if I can but say, in the very agony of my helplessness: "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief."

But the transition from this warrant to have, to the actual having—the translation of the contingent into the categorical—the transmutation of the objective gospel offer, Christ is thine (as the saying is), *for the taking*, into the subjective gospel assurance, Christ is mine, *IN the taking*—that, now, is the difficulty; a difficulty which, more than any other, has vexed the ingenuity of practical and experimental divines, espe-

cially since the era of the Reformation. It is a difficulty which was not much felt, either on the first proclamation of the doctrines of grace in apostolic times, or on the first recovery of these doctrines out of the rubbish of Popery. The fresh and authentic simplicity of a newly awakened or revived soul, bursts through all entanglements, and asks no questions; but with a deep conviction of sin, and a bright discovery of the Saviour, frankly and unhesitatingly makes the obvious application, and rejoices in it. At each of the times referred to, for at least a brief moment, all was fresh and authentic; nor, even in the most doubtful and suspicious age—the most to be doubted, or the most apt to doubt—have there ever failed to be multitudes, converted and become as little children, who have been content to know that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom, each has been ready instinctively to add, “I am chief;” and they have found that knowledge enough. This is our comfort, in attempting to thread the mazes of an intricate inquiry; that to babes in Christ the Spirit opens up all mysteries, and unties or cuts every knot. At the same time, for minds of a more restless turn, and with a view to errors to be shunned, a more minute investigation cannot be declined.

The inquiry, so far as it is still to be followed out, may be regarded as having respect to the office, the nature, the warrant, and the origin of saving faith.

I. Let the office of faith be considered, or, in other words, the place which it holds, and the purpose which it is designed to serve, in the economy of grace.

Let the question be asked, Why is the possession of all saving blessings connected with faith, and with faith alone? It is easy, at once, to dismiss all answers to this question which would imply that there is anything like a plea of merit, or a qualification of worthiness, in faith. It is, doubtless, in itself an excellent grace, most honouring and acceptable to God and his beloved Son, as well as most becoming and ennobling to him who exercises it. It is, moreover, the source of all excellence, working by love, and assimilating its possessor to God himself; for, by "the exceeding great and precious promises" which faith receives, we "are made partakers of the divine nature." But to represent it as saving or justifying, on account of its own excellency or the virtue that goes out of it, is to build again the covenant of works—making the good quality of faith, or its good fruits, our real title to the divine favour and eternal life, instead of the perfect obedience which the law requires. In this view, the dispensation of grace, brought in through the mediation of Christ, consists simply in a relaxation of the terms of the old natural and original method of acceptance—not in the establishment of a method of acceptance entirely new. Again, it is easy to answer the question which has been put, by an appeal to the divine sovereignty, and the undeniable right which God has to dispense his liberality in any manner, and upon any footing, that may seem good to him. This, undoubtedly, is the *ultima ratio*, the final explanation or account to be given of the arrangement in question—that God is free to connect the enjoyment of the

blessing with any act on our part that he may be pleased to appoint. But this summary argument or answer from authority, though it may silence, cannot satisfy; and, on the particular point at issue, it is in accordance both with reason and with Scripture, that we should be not merely silenced, but intelligently satisfied; for, if left on this footing, faith would be as much the mere blind fulfilment of an arbitrary or unexplained condition, as the doing of penance, or the undergoing of circumcision, or the compliance with any task or ritual, would be; and no sufficient reason—indeed, no reason at all—could be given, why life and salvation should be inseparably and infallibly annexed to the one, more than to the other.

Is faith, then, to be viewed, in this matter, as a condition, in any sense, or to any effect, at all? Is that properly its office or function? Setting aside, on the one hand, the idea of a condition of moral worth or qualification, on the part of man, and, on the other hand, the notion of a condition of mere authoritative appointment, on the part of God—as if faith were one of several kinds of terms, any of which he might indifferently, at his own mere good pleasure, have selected and chosen—there remains one other aspect in which faith may be regarded; as a condition of necessary sequence or connection—a *conditio sine qua non*—as that, without which, going before, in the very nature of things, and by the necessity of the case, the desired result or consequence cannot be obtained. In this view, it may be said, without impiety, or even impropriety, that God requires faith in

those who are to be saved, because he cannot save them otherwise; so that, as "without faith it is impossible to please God," so without faith it may be said to be impossible for God to save men; for God saves men in a manner agreeable to their rational and moral nature, as intelligent, conscientious, and accountable beings. Hence, generally, the office or function of faith, as distinguished from its nature, may be said to be this, namely, to effect and secure man's falling in with what God is doing. But more particularly, in determining the office or function of faith—the purpose it is designed to serve—what, in short, renders it indispensable—much will depend on what it is that God is doing, in saving sinners; and especially on the extent to which, and the manner in which, he makes use of the sinner's own co-operation or instrumentality in saving him.

Take, for example, any saving work of God in which man's own agency is employed. This is the simplest class of cases; in which, indeed, there is no difficulty at all. God is about to save Noah, when the flood comes; and this salvation is by faith. Why so? What, in this instance, is the office or function of faith? Evidently to set Noah to work in preparing the ark, "wherein few, that is, eight souls, are saved." For this end God gave the promise, which Noah was to believe, and on which he was to act. So also, when he was about to make Abraham the father of the promised seed, he required faith, and for a similar reason; because, without Abraham's belief, the promise could not have been accomplished. In these

cases, it is not merely from any abstract delight which God may be supposed to have in receiving the homage of a believing assent to his word—nor out of a regard to any barren honour thereby done to his name, as the God of veracity, and faithfulness, and truth—that he requires this act or exercise of faith; but for a more immediately practical end, and, if we may so speak, with a business view; that faith which he requires being the indispensable prerequisite, or *sine qua non*, to the setting in motion of the human agency or instrumentality, on which the attainment of the result that is sought depends.

The case is somewhat different, and the explanation perhaps is not quite so simple, when we pass to another mode of procedure on the part of God, and take, for our example, an act, or work, or transaction, in which all is done by God, without any co-operation or agency of man. Why is faith required now? What is its function? Not, evidently, as in the former instances, to insure the executing or performing of anything, but simply to insure acquiescence, or APPROPRIATION. For there is the same necessity for appropriation here, as there was in these former instances for performance—that the saving work of God may be effectual. That work, we here assume, is complete and finished, independently of any co-operation on the part of man; faith, therefore, on his part, is not needed for any work to be done by him. For what, then, is it demanded? Is it merely that the individual believing may have an intelligent apprehension of this work of God, thus finished with-

out human concurrence, and may admire it, and be suitably affected with all the sentiments and emotions which it is fitted to call forth? Is this what God immediately and most directly seeks when he unfolds his plan of justifying mercy through the righteousness of Christ, and asks you to believe? Is it merely that your faith may lead you to have a right conception of that plan, and do justice to it, and approve of it? Is it simply that he may have your signature, as it were, and your setting to your seal, to justify his wisdom and love in the scheme of redeeming grace? Nay, it is not your approbation or admiration that he desires; but your appropriation of it—your acquiescence in it—your personal application of it to yourselves; and for this end he requires in you faith: otherwise the requirement of faith, in the matter of the sinner's justification, has no meaning or propriety.

Thus, then, in the divine arrangements, where anything is left to be done by man himself, the office or function of faith is properly that of a motive prompting to action; but where, on the other hand, as in the justifying of the ungodly, all is done by God, and the act of justification proceeds upon no work of man, but on the finished work and perfect righteousness of Christ, instead of a motive to any act, faith rather takes the character of an act in itself final; it is the resulting movement, rather than the moving power; it partakes more of the nature of an effect than of the nature of a cause; and resembles not so much the force of hunger prompting to the search for food, as the play and motion of the muscles

and organs of touch and digestion, laying hold of the food that is presented to them. This, at least, would seem to be the exact function of faith, in its ultimate and direct dealings with its proper object; it is like the closing of the hand upon what is brought into contact with it, or the action of the mouth on what is put into it, or the heart's warm embrace of what is its nearest and dearest treasure;—all which processes or operations, considered in themselves, imply no working out of anything new or additional, but simply the appropriating of what is already perfect and complete. We speak, of course, not of the inducements and encouragements to believe, which go before—nor of the gracious impulses and active energetic affections that come after—but of the mere act itself, or exercise of faith, in its immediate dealing with that which is set before it; and, in this view, we cannot fail to perceive the fitness of such expressions as—receiving, embracing, closing with Christ—all describing the office or function which belongs to faith, as that which carries and makes sure the sinner's consent to be saved freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ.

The office or function of faith might be illustrated in connection with another view of this subject, bearing on the personal, real, and vital union, constituted between Christ and his believing people. But, for the purpose of the present inquiry, which is not so much into the value and issue, as into the warrant and manner, of the appropriation of Christ, what has been said may suffice.

CHAPTER V.

A RIGHT and clear understanding of the office or function of saving faith, may go far to supersede, if not to settle, the question respecting its nature.

II. Let it be remembered, then, that the reason why faith is required or appointed as a step in the accomplishment of the Lord's purpose, is not any grace or beauty in faith itself, making it generally acceptable to God and useful to man; but this special virtue which it has, that it provides for and secures man's falling in with what God is doing, and taking the place which God assigns him, whether it be, as in his sanctification, actively to "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling; since it is God which worketh in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 12, 13); or, as in his justification, to appropriate the free gift of God, and make it his own. Now, if we comprehend in our idea of the nature of faith, all that is essential for this office or function which it has to discharge, then, it would seem, besides a rational conviction of the understanding, there must be included in it, or associated with

it, some corresponding affection or desire in the heart; otherwise it is not explained how it either acts as a motive, or appropriates as a hand or handle.

There is, indeed, a difference of statement on this point among those who hold substantially the same sound doctrine; which need not, however, occasion much embarrassment, if the parties could always be sure of mutually understanding one another. Thus some are anxious to make the intellectual part of our nature exclusively the seat of faith, properly so called; faith, according to them, being altogether an act or exercise of the understanding, weighing the evidence submitted to it, and drawing the legitimate or necessary conclusions; and faith in God being simply the belief of what God says, and because he says it. There is an advantage, as they think, in thus isolating the bare and simple act of believing, and separating it from any process going before or coming after, and viewing it as simply the state of the mind assenting to certain truths, on the testimony of Him who cannot lie; a state not at all differing, as to the nature of the thing done, from that of the mind assenting to truth of any kind, on the authority of a credible witness.

The advantage of this way of considering faith is chiefly twofold. In the first place, it most effectually puts away and puts down the Popish or semi-Popish notion, of implicit faith, or of a blind reliance on the supposed communication of spiritual blessings to the soul by a mystical charm, or sacramental virtue, or some process guaranteed by the priest, of which he

who is the subject of it need have no knowledge or cognizance at all. That the faith with which all saving blessings are connected, is a reasonable act of an intelligent mind, not merely taking upon trust the thing said to be done, but understanding and assenting to what is done—is a great scriptural truth, and a great safeguard against the delusions of the Man of Sin. It is sanctioned by such passages as the following, in which, after dwelling on the fact that the gospel system is foolishness to the world, the apostle is careful to explain that it satisfies the reason, and carries the intelligent assent, of the upright or sincere inquirer:—"Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought;—but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory." (1 Cor. ii. 6, 7.) Again, in the second place, this view tends to divest faith of that character of unknown and mysterious peculiarity, which is apt to make it appear, in the eyes of an anxious inquirer, so very recondite an exercise of soul—so very unattainable a grace. Such a one is told of the necessity of faith, and hears much of its workings and experiences; and conceiving that it must be some high and singular attainment, altogether different from the ordinary actings of the mind, he harasses and perplexes himself in groping after this unknown something, without which, it seems, he cannot be saved; and so, he either involves himself in a labyrinth of inextricable difficulties, or elaborately gets up some

frame or feeling which, he thinks, answers the descriptions usually given of faith; whereupon, having got, at last, as he imagines, the key, he seems boldly to enter into the treasury. It is manifest that the alternation, or transition, or vibration, as it were, here, is between absolute helplessness on the one hand, and a subtle form of self-righteousness on the other; and it is a safe and blessed relief for such a mind, to have faith presented to it in its very barest, and most naked aspect, and to be made to see that there is nothing recondite or mysterious in the act of believing, considered in itself; inasmuch as it is really nothing more than giving to the true God, in reference to things divine and eternal, the same reasonable and intelligent credit that you give to a true man, in reference to the things of time.

With these advantages, the intellectual view of the nature of faith comes strongly recommended by its simplicity and clearness; nor would we say that it is practically defective, if we regard it as the isolating, for the purpose of better mental analysis, of what in reality never exists but in a certain combination. For as, in physical science, an analytical chemist may take out of a compound or complex substance one single ingredient, that he may subject it to the test of a separate and searching scrutiny, and verify its character in its purest and most unequivocal form, while still it may be true that the ingredient or element in question is never, as a natural phenomenon, to be found otherwise than in a given union or affinity; so, in the science of mind, the moral analyst may deal with

some act or state of the living soul, which, though seeming to be one and simple, is yet capable of being resolved into parts. He may detach and clear away, as in a refining crucible, all that may be regarded as the adjuncts, or accessaries, or accompaniments; leaving single and alone the real central and staple article of the mass, round which the rest all cluster, and with which they all combine; and this he may do for the most useful and satisfactory purpose, while he may be himself the readiest to admit that, for ordinary practical uses, it is the mass as a whole with which we have to do.

Thus, to apply this illustration, let it be granted that faith may be resolved ultimately and strictly into intellectual assent, or belief, on the evidence of divine testimony—still it remains true, as a matter of fact, that this assent or belief, if it is of a saving character, has ever associated and blended with it, on the one hand, a deep sense of sin in the conscience, a clear sight of Christ in the understanding, and a consenting will and longing desire in the heart; and on the other, sentiments of trust, reliance, confidence, or what can only be described as leaning and resting upon Christ; and all these, in actual experience, so enter into combination with the central element of assent or belief, that the whole may be practically considered as making up one state of mind, complex in its ingredients, but simple enough in its acting and out-going—the state of mind, namely, in which, as a poor sinner, I flee away from my guilty self to my righteous Saviour, and roll over the burden of all my iniquities

on him who, though he knew no sin, was made sin for such as I am, that such as I, the chief of sinners, might be made the righteousness of God in him.

There are two observations, however, which it seems necessary to make, in the way, not so much of controverting, as of guarding on the one hand, and supplementing on the other, this analytical view, if we may so call it, of the nature of faith.

The *first* is, that it must be understood with an express or implied qualification, recognising the moral character and the moral influence of faith—its moral character, as proceeding from a renewed will, and its moral influence, as determining that renewed will to embrace Christ, or God in Christ, as the chief good. Not only to maintain, untouched, the fundamental principle of man's responsibility to God for his belief, is this explanation necessary; but with reference, also, to the scriptural view of the depravity of man, as well as the office or function of the faith which is required of him. All belief is voluntary, in so far as it depends on the fixing of the mind upon the substance of the truth to be believed, and the evidence or testimony on which belief is claimed. To understand what we are expected to assent to, and to weigh the grounds of the assent expected, implies an exercise of attention; and attention is a faculty under the control of the will. Hence, any perverse bias of the will must affect the kind and degree of the attention which is given, and consequently, also, the result attained. On this ground, it may be most consistently maintained, that the renewal of the will is an indispensable preliminary

to the believing assent which the understanding has to give to the truth of God. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them; because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) The intellect of fallen man is clouded and struck with impotency, through the entire estrangement of his affections from God, and the enmity of his carnal mind against God, and the impossibility of his willing subjection to God. He is prejudiced, blinded, darkened; and in order that the light may get into his understanding, and bring home to it a conviction of the reality of things divine, there must be a direct work of God in the soul, restoring to it the capacity of discerning and perceiving the truth which God has to reveal. Again, it is presumed, in the principle on which this theory of faith proceeds, that once to carry the understanding, is to carry all. Get the mind, or intellect, enlightened and convinced, and all is gained. Thus it is alleged that a man, really understanding and assenting to all that God reveals respecting coming wrath and present grace, cannot but flee from the one, and lay hold on the other; and hence, though neither reliance nor appropriation be held to be of the essence of faith, yet both are secured, if you have the intelligent belief of what God testifies concerning his Son. It is true, there seem to be individuals not a few, whose understandings are well informed in the whole of Christian doctrine, and convinced of the truth of every portion of it, who yet give too palpable evidence of their being still unrenewed. But then, it is said, there must be, unknown to us, and perhaps even

to themselves, some mistake or misapprehension in some particular, or a latent incredulity in regard to some point: they cannot really know and believe all the truth; since, if they did, it would be impossible for them to continue, for a moment, impenitent and unreconciled.

Now it is here, if anywhere, that we confess we feel the exclusively intellectual view, as it is called, of the nature of faith, giving way. We may allow the extreme improbability of a man being able to comprehend, even intellectually, the whole truth of God, in all its terrible and affecting reality, without an inward work of God on his conscience, his mind, his will, his heart; though even in this view it is most painfully instructive to observe how very near, at least, natural intelligence, under the ordinary means of grace and the common operations of the Spirit, may, and does often, come, to a right speculative knowledge, and a real theoretical admission and belief, of all the statements of the Divine Record, without any consciousness, or any satisfactory evidence, of a change of heart; and it is a solemn duty, in a land of privilege and profession, to warn all hearers of the gospel that they may have what seems to be commonly understood by an intellectual acquaintance with things divine, and an intellectual conviction of their truth, through the mere use of their natural faculties, under gospel light and gospel opportunities, without being spiritually enlightened, so as savingly to know Christ Jesus the Lord. But it is the other aspect of this matter that chiefly strikes us as doubtful. When it is taken for

granted that the understanding is the ruling principle of our nature—and that to carry it, is to carry all—we have some fear that man's depravity is under-rated. Is it so very clear, that a man, knowing and believing all that is revealed of his own lost estate, and the Redeemer's free and full salvation, will necessarily consent to be saved? Is there no case of a sinner, whose mind is thoroughly enlightened, so far as an acquaintance with all the truth of God is concerned, and thoroughly convinced, so far as intellectual assurance goes, yet, from sheer enmity to God, and unwillingness to own subjection or obligation to God, refusing to accept deliverance, and choosing rather to perish than be indebted, on such terms, to a Being whom he hates—who will not barter salvation with him for a price, and from whom he cannot bring himself to take it as a free gift? Or, if such a case be considered visionary and ideal, and if it be alleged that, in point of fact, such a man cannot really know what it is to perish, or cannot believe in the certainty of his perishing, since, if he did, he could not but seek and be anxious to escape—then, at any rate, we are mistaken, if it be not the earnest feeling of almost every child of God, not only that such a depth of depravity is conceivable, but that it is no more than might have been, and but for a strong pressure from above on his rebellious will and heart, must have been, realized in his own experience. On this account we are rather inclined to consider consent and confidence as not merely flowing naturally and necessarily from faith, but forming its very essence; and giving all due pro-

minence to the share which the understanding has in bringing about that state of mind which we call faith, we would still place its seat in the moral, fully as much as in the intellectual, part of our nature, and make it chiefly consist, not exclusively in the assent or credit given to what God reveals or testifies, but also in our embracing, with a fiducial reliance or trust, Him whom God reveals, and of whom he testifies, as the Lord our righteousness, and the Lord our strength; according to that saying of the apostle, which, though we would not urge it as conclusive, seems, at least, to countenance this view: "With the heart, man believeth unto righteousness." (Rom. x. 10.)*

And the *second* observation which we have to make confirms this leaning. For, returning again to what was said of the office or function of faith, as appropriating Christ, and all things in him, it would seem that it is only through the medium of this trust or reliance—this casting of ourselves upon Christ—that we arrive at any intelligible connection or correspondence between the nature of faith and its office, or are enabled to see how faith is fitted for the purpose which it is designed to serve; what there is in it that adapts it for the appropriation of the salvation presented to its acceptance in the gospel. If we limit our view of faith to the mere assent or credit given to the testimony of God, then, on the one hand, no very satisfactory reason can be assigned for the selection of faith as the medium or instrument of justification (unless it be that it excludes works, which is rather a

* See Appendix G.

reason why works are not, than why faith should be, the appointed way of obtaining the blessing); and further, on the other hand, it seems difficult to explain how a sinner can get at the direct act of APPROPRIATION, which it is the very office and function of faith to secure. True, he may arrive at this appropriation, and even at full personal assurance, by a reflex act of faith, or a syllogistic process of argument founded on his own act of believing. For though there is no revelation or testimony of God concerning the salvation of any individual sinner, personally and by name; though there is nothing beyond the general declaration of his being able and willing to save all and any sinners who will believe; yet, according to the intellectual view of faith, appropriation may be reached by reasoning thus:—Christ is the Saviour of every one that believeth; but I am conscious that I believe—that I understand and assent to what is revealed in the gospel concerning Christ, and the way of acceptance in him; therefore, I conclude that Christ is MY Saviour; and I rejoice in him as such. And this, as all admit, is a legitimate and scriptural way of arriving, through a process of reflex self-inquiry, at a full assurance of one's personal interest in Christ. But we plead, also, for a more direct act of appropriation; for which, on the theory of faith we are now examining, there is scarcely any room. According to that other theory which we would prefer—but rather as supplementary than as antagonist to the former—making faith consist mainly in trust or reliance on Him of whom the Father testifies, we hold that the discoveries of Christ in the

gospel, as the Saviour of sinners generally, are so full, pointed, and precise in themselves, and are so brought home to the individual, by the Spirit working in him, that he is persuaded, as by a leap—not indeed at hazard or in the dark, but still as one would venture from a burning house into the arms of a friend standing below—to cast himself upon Christ; and in so doing, he directly appropriates Christ as his own; his language being that of Thomas, in the very looking to Christ: “My Lord, and my God.”

For this, we may observe, in conclusion, is probably the nearest approach that can be made to the embodying of the *direct* act of faith, in language such as does not turn it into the *reflex*; when one naturally hard and slow of heart to believe, having yielded, it may be, to sullen despair, refusing to be comforted, has such an insight given him into the love of Jesus, and the meaning of his wounded hands and side, as constrains him, not only to recognise the Divine character of Him who is mighty to save, but to realize His gracious and saving relation to himself. There is an end of hesitation; there is a frank resolution to confide in Him; there is a committing of his soul and his all to him; and that not in any express formula or definite, reflective, proposition—such as, I take Him to be mine, or, He is mine—but in the direct, straightforward, earnestness of ejaculation: “My Lord, and my God.” *

* See Appendix, Notes F and G.

CHAPTER VI.

THE warrant, or ground, of faith is to be considered in connection with the views already given, respecting (I.) the office or function it has to discharge, as well as (II.) the nature of the act or exercise itself.

III. Generally, it is to be observed, that the warrant or ground of faith is the divine testimony. I believe, because the Lord hath said it. The formal reason for believing, is not the reasonableness of what the Lord saith, but the fact that the Lord saith it. To give credit to a report on account of its inherent probability, or the circumstantial evidence by which it is corroborated, is a different thing from receiving it on the simple assurance of a competent and trustworthy witness. The states of mind implied in these two acts of faith respectively, are very different; the one being that of a judge or critic—the other, that of a disciple or a little child.*

* I may be allowed, perhaps, to refer, for an illustration of this distinction, in reference to our faith in the work of creation—which, however, is easily and obviously applicable to our faith in the work of redemption—to the first chapter of “Contributions towards the Exposition of the Book of Genesis.”

It is true, indeed, on the one hand, that as an element, and a very important one, in determining the question, whether it be the Lord that speaketh or not, we are entitled to take into account the substance and manner of the communication made to us; to weigh well its bearing on what we otherwise know of God and of ourselves, and to gather from its high tone of sovereignty, so worthy of the speaker, and its deep breathings of mercy, so suited to the parties appealed to, many precious and delightful confirmations of the fact, that it is a message from heaven that has reached us, and a message addressed to us, and meant for us, poor sinners upon earth. It is true, also, on the other hand, that, in gracious condescension, God does not merely announce to us peremptorily His will and our duty—abruptly intimating that so it is, and so it must be; but He is at pains to explain how it is so, and how it must be so; He lets us into the *rationale* of his own procedure; He shows us what he is doing, and why, and how, he is doing it; He not merely proclaims the general result, that his justice is satisfied on behalf of all that choose, or become willing, to embrace the righteousness of his Son; but He goes into the details of the mysterious transaction, and makes it plain and palpable that this satisfaction is real, and cannot but be sufficient; He not merely summons, authoritatively, the rebels against his government to submit and be reconciled; but He argues, and expostulates, and pleads with them—unfolding the whole plan and purpose of wise and holy benevolence, whereby he is enabled to receive them gra-

ciously and love them freely ; and all this he does that they may have no excuse for their unbelief, and no pretence for not being intelligently and thoroughly satisfied.

Still it is ultimately, or rather immediately, on the *ipse dixit* of God—his **THUS SAITH THE LORD**—that our faith must rest ; for then only am I really exercising this blessed grace, when I am not merely canvassing the contents of the revelation, with a view to settle my mind as to whence it comes, nor even meditating on the wondrous wisdom with which all is arranged, so as to harmonize all the attributes of God, and meet all the exigencies of man's case ; but when, like the child Samuel, I say from the heart : “ Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth ;” or, like the docile and grateful virgin mother, reposing her trust, not on the explanation given of the marvellous announcement made to her, but on the truth of Him from whom it came : “ Behold the handmaid of the Lord : be it unto me according to **THY WORD**.”

It is plain, however, that as regards the nature of the faith which I exercise, and still more its fitness for the function or office assigned to it, much will depend, not merely on the precise literal amount of what is said, but also on the view which I take of Him, whose word or testimony is my warrant for believing. Thus, to make his testimony a foundation of that faith which is needed, the veracity, the faithfulness, the sincerity and truth of God, must be owned and appreciated ; otherwise there can be no credit given to him, and no confidence reposed in him, at

all. But it would seem that other attributes of his character must be apprehended, in order that his testimony may be a ground of the faith which is desiderated and sought.

For example, in addition to his veracity, the unchangeableness of God must be recognised. How indispensable this is, will appear, if we inquire what is the common source of the scepticism, whether of presumption or of doubt, which lies and lurks at the bottom of the unbelieving heart. It is not so much the veracity, or general truthfulness of God, that is called in question, as his unchangeableness, or the immutability of his counsels and his commands. Men forget that it is not only said of him, "He is not a man, that he should lie;" but it is added, "nor the son of man, that he should repent." Hence, in reference to threatened judgment, that reliance which they are so prone to place on the imagined placability of God, and the ready heed they give to the argument of the tempter: "Ye shall not surely die." Thus, in a similar case—alas! too much of ordinary experience in human families—when I warn my child of my determination to visit his iniquities with stripes, and his transgressions with the rod, why does he run away from me, careless and unconcerned? Not so much because he doubts my honesty, as because he doubts my inflexibility of purpose. He is quite aware that I am in earnest in straitly forbidding the offence, and loudly intimating my resolution to punish it; but he sees a relenting fondness in the glance of the very eye that would sternly frown on him; and experience has

taught him that I may change my mind ; and he has a vague notion that if the worst, as the saying is, come to the worst, my parental tenderness will get the better of me, or something will happen to appease me, and somehow he will get off. In the same way, when I tell him of the general principles according to which his conduct in youth must exert an influence on his welfare in after years, and early profligacy must entail upon him either early death or an old age of vain remorse and premature decay, he admits my veracity, as well as the average probability of the testimony which I bear ; but he lays hold of the doubt that may be cast on the inflexibility of the law, or the invariableness of the providence, which I seek to announce to him ; and he can find many plausible reasons for a relaxation of the rule or practice in his especial favour. Thus he carries his scepticism and calculation of chances, from the parental government to the divine. So also, in my dealings of kindness with him, how is it that, when I fondle and caress my child most warmly, I may detect, under all his wild gaiety, a shrinking and half-avowed sense of insecurity ? It is not that he doubts my sincerity at the time ; but, alas ! like the school-boys in the "Deserted Village," the "boding trembler," having found that I may be swayed by passion, or warped by prejudice, has "learned to trace the day's disasters in my morning face."

The threatenings and promises of God are too generally received in a precisely similar spirit and temper by the children of men. (Ps. 1. 21 ; Matt. xxv. 24.) And, in fact, the unbelief of the evil heart

manifests itself in this very disposition to regard the denunciations of God's law as mere ebullitions of personal, and therefore placable, resentment; and the assurances of his gospel as the relentings of a merely pitiful, and therefore precarious, indulgence. On both sides, in reference both to the severity and to the goodness of God, what is chiefly needed is, to have men convinced, not only that God is really in earnest, but that he is unchangeably so.

But this is not all. There must be not merely a conviction of the unchangeableness of God, but a conviction also, that this unchangeableness is necessary, reasonable, and right; that it is not to be confounded with the perseverance of mere obstinacy or caprice; but is the result of the absolute perfection and infinite excellence of the divine character and nature. Among men, one often holds on in the course which he has indicated and announced—whether of favouritism or of vindictiveness—merely because he has committed himself, and has not courage, or is ashamed, to draw back. Such a one is essentially of a weak temper and frame of mind, and never can be the object either of respect or of faith. He may be feared or flattered as a tyrant, but can never be loved as a gracious father, or revered as a just master and lord. The unchangeableness of Jehovah, on the other hand, must be viewed in connection with the glorious attributes of his character, and the everlasting principles of his administration, as the moral governor of the universe; and thus viewed, his unchangeableness must so commend itself to the intelligence, the conscience, and the

whole moral nature of the individual to whom it is rightly manifested, as to make him feel, not only that God is, and must be, unchangeable—but that, for his part, even if it were possible, he would not wish Him to be otherwise.

It is here, particularly, that we may see the necessity of an acquaintance with God's character, as preliminary, if not in the order of time, at least in the order of causation, to that saving faith which rests upon his word or testimony; according to such scriptural statements as these: "They that know thy name shall put their trust in thee:" "Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace." Apart from this knowledge of his name, or nature, and this acquaintance with his character, the most explicit assurances, either of judgment on the one hand, or of mercy on the other, must fail to bring home real conviction or contentment to my soul. Even if I were forced to admit the truth of his commands and prohibitions—his threatenings and promises—and were also most unequivocally told of their irrevocable steadfastness, and of the impossibility of any change of his mind with regard to them—still, in ignorance of his real character, and blind to all its glorious excellences and perfections, there would be no acquiescence on my part, but, on the contrary, either impatience, sullen resentment, and defiance, on the one hand, or carelessness and presumption, on the other. Beyond all question, the faith of which we are in search, whatever word of God it is to be based and built on—whether his word of wrath or his word of grace—presupposes an enlightened knowledge of

his nature; and such a knowledge, too, as carries consent, and even a measure of complacency, along with it. No true sense of sin, or right apprehension of the holy displeasure and righteous judgment of God, could be wrought in my conscience, by the mere announcement of the sentence of death under which I lie—were it ever so terribly thundered in my ears, and the withering conviction of its irrevocable and endless endurance rivetted ever so deeply in my heart. Like the devils, I might believe and tremble; but this extorted belief, forced on me by the mere word of God, unaccompanied with any true and spiritual acquaintance with his name, has nothing in common with the faith which we seek. To realize my condemnation aright, I must not merely apprehend it as a fact; I must enter also into its reasonableness—its righteousness—its inevitable necessity. I must not merely believe that I am condemned; but there must enter into the ground and reason of my belief, such a view of God as makes me feel that I am condemned, not because God has said so, but because GOD IS WHAT HE IS; and makes me feel, moreover, that even if it were to effect my own escape from condemnation, I would not have him to be other than he is. In like manner, in regard to any word of God conveying a promise of mercy, it is not that mere word, taken by itself, that becomes the ground or warrant of my faith, but that word, as the word of Him, who is no longer unknown—whose name and character—whose attributes and perfections, are now recognised, apprehended, or, in short, perceived and seen.

Hence the unspeakable importance of the cross, and the preaching of the cross, as a manifestation of the nature of God, or of what God is; and especially of what God is, in those acts or exercises of his administration in which he is peculiarly the God with whom we have to do—in dealing, that is, with sin—whether to punish or to pardon. Apart from all the verbal assurances connected with it—all the promises and threatenings of God's word that may be associated with it—the cross, in itself, as an actual transaction and fact in the history of the divine government, exhibits and reveals, not what God says, but WHAT GOD IS; and what, in all his dealings with sin and with sinners, he necessarily must be. And they who are spiritually enlightened to “behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” now see both the severity and the goodness of God in a very different point of view from that in which they once regarded them. Thus, without reference, for the present, to the question of my personal interest in it, or its ultimate bearing on my personal destiny, there the cross stands as a fact, significantly revealing to me, if my eyes are opened to take it in, the real character of that God with whom I have to do, and the manner in which, being what he is, he must necessarily deal with sinners, and with me, the chief of sinners.

For this very end, indeed, is the great fact of the atonement made matter of revelation at all; that the view thus given of the name, or nature, or character of God, may enter as a constituent element, or a de-

termining cause, into the assent which I give to the word of God, in the assurances and promises which that word connects with it; otherwise the transaction might have taken place in another part of the creation, and the knowledge of it might have been confined to another race of beings. In so far as it is an expedient or device in the divine government for getting over, as it were, a difficulty, and meeting an exigency, and enabling God to dispense amnesty and peace—it might have equally well served the ends of justice to have it hid from the eyes of men; and it might have been enough to proclaim to them, without explanation, the mere general message of reconciliation which it warrants God to announce; nay, this might even have seemed a more thorough trial of men's dispositions, and a simpler appeal to their sense of present danger, and their natural desire of safety. But God sought to be believed, not merely for his *word's*, but also for his *NAME'S* sake; not only on the ground of what he might say, but on the ground of what he is, and must necessarily ever be. No faith based upon his mere word, apart from an intelligent and satisfying acquaintance with his nature, could effect the end in view; for no such faith could insure that falling in with what he is doing—that acquiescence and willing subjection—which is the very thing that he seeks and cares for.

Hence the cross is revealed; and it is revealed as a real transaction. God, in Christ, is seen dealing with sin. And how does he deal with it? He is seen inflicting its full penal and retributive sentence—

punishing, in the strictest sense, the individual who, then and there, takes the sin as his own.* But that individual, thus bearing the punishment of sin, is no other than his well-beloved Son. What room is there here, for the suspicion of anything like vindictiveness or mere perseverance in a course to which he is committed? It cannot be merely on account of what he has said, in the sentence pronounced; it must be on account of what he is, in his own nature, irrespective of any word gone forth out of his mouth; that even when his own Son appears before him as the party to be punished, there is no relenting or mitigation, but the judgment is carried out to the uttermost. Then, again, as he is revealed in the cross, how is God seen to deal with the sins of those whom he reconciles to himself? Not in the way of pardoning their sins, in the sense of remitting their punishment, but rather in the way of making provision for the punishment being endured by his own Son in their stead; so that they are now free. Thus, in dispensing to all such his grace and favour, in Christ, as well as in inflicting judgment on his own Son, as their surety, God appears as justifying the ungodly who believe in Jesus, not merely on the ground of what he has said, but on the ground also of his very nature; insomuch that, before he can withhold these blessings from those, the punishment of whose sins has been borne by his own Son—who has also, on their behalf, brought in an everlasting righteousness—not only must he fail to fulfil what he has spoken, but he must cease to be the

* See Appendix H.

God he now is—the I AM, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Hence the peculiar force of such an assurance as this: “I am the Lord Jehovah, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” (Mal. iii. 6.) It is an appeal to his name, as confirming his word, and making it absolute and irrevocable.

On the whole, the cross, or rather the transaction there completed, reveals God as never pardoning, in the strict sense of the word, but always punishing sin; and never punishing, but always rewarding, righteousness; and, moreover, as dealing thus with sin and with righteousness, for his great name’s sake. Let me be really enlightened to see the real meaning of this great event, and I have an entirely new apprehension of the character of God, especially in reference not only to what he tells me of the way in which he deals with sin, but to what I now see to be the only way in which he can possibly deal with sin. My eyes are opened to perceive that he does not punish vindictively, or pardon capriciously, as I once fondly imagined—that he does not merely act on the principle that he must keep his word; but that, both in punishing sin, and accepting righteousness, he acts according to the perfection of his own blessed and glorious nature; which same nature, blessed and glorious, I dare not now expect, nor would wish, even for my own salvation, to have different from what I now perceive it to be.

CHAPTER VII.

ASSUMING, therefore, this acquaintance with God, and this new insight into his glorious character and name, let us return to his word or testimony, which is more directly the ground or foundation of that faith of which we speak.

Here we might enumerate all the commands, and invitations, and promises of the gospel, and we might show how full and free a warrant these afford to every individual sinner of the human race to lay hold of Christ, and to appropriate him as his own Saviour; but adverting once more to the bearing of a right knowledge of God's name on the kind of credit or assent which we give to his testimony, we may practically consider that testimony as threefold.

1. God testifies, in his Word, to my guilt, depravity, and condemnation. This testimony, did it stand apart from the manifestation which he makes to me of his character, might irritate and provoke me, or simply drive me to angry and dogged despair. But now, if I am spiritually enlightened to know God, how differently does it affect me! I can suspect nothing arbitrary or

harsh in his sentence that condemns me; I can expect nothing weak or capricious in his treatment of me. I learn that I am condemned; I perceive that it must be so; I have no excuse—my mouth is stopped. Nor has God himself any alternative. Looking to the cross, I see the principle on which God punishes such sin as mine—not vindictively, or merely because he has said the word—but necessarily, from his very nature being such as it is. I believe, therefore, God's testimony concerning my own condemnation; but my belief of it now, in my relenting and softened frame of mind, arising out of my being enabled to see, and to do justice to, the real character of God, and the obligation I am under to love and serve him, because he is what he is—is very different from the conviction of mortified pride and insolent defiance, which might have been forced on me by the mere thunder of wrath. I have sinned wilfully, as I now feel and own, against God, and am justly judged. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." (Ps. li. 4.) Again,

2. God testifies to me, in his Word, of the complete safety and blessedness of all who are once in Christ. And here, also, the importance of an acquaintance with his character, with a view to its bearing on my belief of his testimony, becomes very apparent. He tells me how he treats sinners in Christ Jesus—what favours he bestows upon them—what complete blessedness he secures to them. Well; but I might hear all this with a feeling of envy, or of mere wonder; or

with an idle, indefinite hope, that I might, perhaps, one day, have a share in these benefits. There might seem to me to be in all this gracious treatment of his people, nothing more, on the part of God, than great kindness and indulgence, or, at best, a sort of inflexible favouritism, and a determination to stand true to what He may once have said, of them, or to them. But let me acquaint myself with God; and then, when he testifies to me of the grace which he dispenses to them that are in Christ, I not only admit that it may be so, or that it is so, but I perceive that it must be so. I see the principle on which he deals with them so graciously. I apprehend, not only the certainty, but the reasonableness, of their joyous security. It must be so. For such is the inherent efficacy of the atonement, as a real transaction, and a real infliction of the sentence of judgment on the Surety, instead of the actual offenders—that God cannot but justify those who are in Christ; if he did not so justify them, he must cease to be what he is. Hence, instead of grudging and suspicious envy, as regards others, or vague wishes, as regards myself, in the view of that state in which the Word of God assures me that those who believe in Jesus are, there is wrought in me the single, solitary conviction, that in all this, God is righteous—that his ways are just and true, and that, as there cannot possibly be salvation out of Christ, so in Christ there can be no condemnation.

It may be necessary here to explain, that throughout the whole of our present argument, in speaking of Christ's work of atonement as a real transaction, and as,

on that account, by its own inherent efficacy, rendering infallibly and necessarily certain the justification of all that are in him—we have been considering it as a manifestation of the character of God to men, and not simply as a ground or reason of His own procedure. There are two distinct senses in which that work of Christ, viewed in its connection with the name, or character, of God, may be said to secure the salvation of those whom, as their covenant head, he represents. Thus, *in the first place*, for his name's sake, God, being such as he is, must necessarily provide for all the seed of Christ being in due time brought to him, and savingly made one with him: otherwise, were any of them to be finally lost—the punishment of their sins having been actually borne by Christ—there would be injustice and inconsistency with God; it is, in fact, an impossibility—so long as his character remains what it is. This is a precious truth, making it certain that “all whom the Father giveth Christ shall come unto him.” But it is not to our present purpose, though it bears upon the remaining part of our subject. We observe, therefore, *secondly*, that, for his name's sake, God, being such as he is, cannot but justify all who are in Christ. This is the open and revealed side of the pillar, which becomes the warrant of the sinner's faith. In the cross, he sees not only how God may, but how he must, his nature being such as it is, receive graciously, and rejoice over, all who come unto him through Christ, and who, by faith, become one with his own beloved Son. But to return, we observe once more,

3. God testifies to me of his willingness to make me a partaker of the same benefits, on these very terms, which I now see to be so reasonable and necessary. At this stage, especially, my knowledge of the name, or character, of God, obtained through a clear and spiritually enlightened insight into the meaning of the transaction completed on the cross, goes far to determine the sort of credit which I give to the divine testimony, and the confidence I repose in it; for it has the effect at once of silencing and of satisfying me—silencing my inquisitive presumption, and satisfying my real anxiety.

Thus, *in the first place*, if I am disposed to call in question the sufficiency of the mere word of God, addressed to me, a miserable sinner, who, after all, may not turn out to be one of the chosen—if I am tempted to demand an explanation of that, or any other similar difficulty, as a preliminary to my believing God's word—I am met at once with the appeal to his name; for I find that what I am to believe is not an arbitrary rule or law, which becomes true and certain because God has said it, but a fact or principle that is, in its very nature, unchangeably sure, and must be so as long as God is what he is. It is not by a simple act of his will, or utterance of his voice, that God brings in the whole world, out of Christ, as guilty before him, and accepts believers in Christ, alone, as righteous. His character, or name, being what it is, He could not do otherwise. The atoning death, or rather the meritorious obedience unto death, of his own Son, in the character of a surety and substitute, being once ad-

mitted as a fact—there is no more room for discretion, on the part of God, in this matter; to speak with reverence, he has no choice now, and no alternative;—those who are out of Christ he cannot but condemn, being what he is; and those who are in Christ he cannot but justify, accept, and save. It is thus simply IMPOSSIBLE THAT, COMING UNTO HIM, THROUGH CHRIST, I SHOULD BE CAST OUT. Now, this is precisely what I have to believe, on the assurance of the word or testimony of God. He explicitly and unequivocally declares that, coming unto him through Christ, I shall not be cast out. Can I hesitate to believe this, when I find that this is an intimation, on his part, not only of what shall be, but of what must be; that he has so revealed his name, or character, or nature, as to make it absolutely certain, that if I will but come unto him, through Christ, I shall be necessarily saved? I have now not only God's word for it, but God's nature; and what more would I ask? But this is not all. For,

In the second place, to satisfy real anxiety, as well as to silence idle questioning, God appeals to his name, in this transaction, and gives it, as it were, in pledge and pawn, to the hesitating and trembling soul. Have I endless misgivings as to whether, vile as I am, I may venture to come to God, through Christ? or whether, even coming through Christ, I may not be too vile to be accepted? God assures me, most emphatically, that I may freely come, and that, coming, I shall surely be received most graciously. Is this to me too good news to be true? Am I incredulous

from the very greatness of the glad surprise, like the disciples of whom it is said, that they "believed not for joy?" Such is the condescension of God, that when I would even question his word, he is ready to give me the assurance of his name. Am I apprehensive that I may miss my aim, and be disappointed in my timid and trembling expectation of finding rest, peace, and all saving blessings in Christ? It cannot be. For his word's sake, he would not suffer it; nor for his name's sake. He cannot deny himself. It would be not merely a breach of the promise that has gone out of his mouth, but an outrage on his very nature, were he to suffer any poor sinner to perish, when he would fain cling to Christ, or any anxious soul to seek his face in vain.

The passages of Scripture are innumerable in which this use is made of the name of God, either by God himself pledging it, and swearing by it, as the confirmation of his promises to his believing people, or by poor and perishing sinners, helpless and hopeless, pleading it, and appealing to it, in their cries to him. This name, or nature, of God, furnishes a good reason why God should extend mercy to me, the chief of sinners, and I should reckon on that mercy as both sure and gracious—infallibly certain, and altogether gratuitous and free. "Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." (1 Tim. i. 16.) It is alleged by God himself, as his motive for imparting sanctification as well as justifi-

cation—a new heart as well as newness of life—and so completing the salvation of all that come unto him. “Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name’s sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.” (Ezek. xxxvi. 21–38.) And it is the security or guarantee implied in God’s swearing by himself, that his blessing, once bestowed, is irrevocable; as when he gives to those who might be discouraged by the fear of falling away, the pledge of two “immutable things—wherein it is impossible for him to lie”—that is, his immutable word and his

immutable nature—to prove the impossibility of his casting off his people, and “show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, that they might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them.” (Heb. vi. 9–20.) In all these instances, men are asked and expected to believe, not merely on the ground of what God says, but on the ground, also, of what God is; and God is seen to challenge their credit and confidence, not by the authority of his word exclusively, but in respect of the necessity arising out of the very immutability of his nature, and the absolute perfection of his glorious character and name.

The view now given of the warrant of saving faith may be rendered still more clear, when we go on to consider the remaining particular embraced in this inquiry, namely, the source and origin of that faith. But, even as we have now endeavoured to present it, it has an important bearing on the general question of the extent and nature of Christ's work of atonement. For, in this view, it is of consequence to observe, that much less than is usually imagined depends on the explicitness and preciseness of any verbal statement regarding it; such as may be applicable to a sinner, even before he believes; and much more, on the exhibition of character which it gives, and which a sinner, so situated, may apprehend, as his chief encouragement to believe. It is not so much what God says, as what God is, that gives boldness to confide in him; or, at least, what he says, were it ever so

articulate, would go but a little way to assure my heart, were it not for my apprehension of what he is. Were the warrant of my faith the simple *ipse dixit* of God, or his bare word, I might have some reason for requiring very express information as to my actual and ultimate interest in the salvation of which he speaks to me, before believing or taking it to be mine. But the ground on which I am to believe, being not so much that he says so and so, as that he who says so and so, is of such and such a character, and cannot but act in such and such a way—I am less concerned about knowing beforehand what I am, or am to be, to him, and more occupied with the thought of what I shall assuredly find Him to be to me.

And, here, let us sum up, in a few brief statements, the information which, as we have seen, the cross gives concerning God; and which, rightly and spiritually apprehended, becomes the ground and foundation of appropriating faith.

1. The objective revelation or discovery which the cross gives of God, and of the name, or nature, or character of God, is evidently general and universal. It is a manifestation of the divine perfections, and the divine manner of dealing with sin and sinful men, to all alike and indiscriminately. Hence it is a warrant of faith to all. But,

2. That it may serve this purpose, of a universal manifestation of God's real character and actual mode of procedure, the transaction accomplished on the cross must be a real transaction. It must be the real infliction of judicial and retributive punishment on

him who suffers there; otherwise it is no manifestation of the principle on which God, being what he is, must necessarily deal with sin; so that he can acquit or justify the guilty, only when their punishment is vicariously borne by an infinitely worthy substitute in their stead, while, on the other hand, he cannot but acquit and justify them, when they are thus represented and redeemed. It is needless to say that this implies a limitation of the efficacy of Christ's death to those ultimately saved; but it is important to observe, that this very limitation of it to those, in reference to whom alone it can be a real transaction, is essential to its being a manifestation of God's real character, universally and alike, to all. For, ..

3. This real and actual, and therefore particular and personal, work of substitution, becomes a sufficient warrant of faith to all, through the discovery which it makes of what God is, and must necessarily be, as an avenging Judge, to all who are out of Christ; and of what he is, and must necessarily be, as a gracious Father and justifying Lord, to all who are in Christ. It reveals the impossibility, from the very nature of God, and his being what he is, of pardon out of Christ, and of condemnation in Christ. Not by any arbitrary arrangement, or mere spontaneous act of will, do I find God acquitting some for Christ's sake, and rejecting others; but, by the very necessity of his nature, I perceive him (with reverence be it said) shut up to the acceptance of all who are in Christ—because their punishment has been actually endured, and all righteousness on their behalf ful-

filled by him—and to the acceptance of them alone : and it is this perception of the inevitable sentence under which every sinner out of Christ lies, and the absolute certainty and necessity of its removal from all who are in him, which shuts me up to the belief of his testimony, when he assures me, that I have but to come unto him, through Christ, and that so coming, I cannot fail to be saved. Nor,

4. Can it really be any practical hindrance, that Christ's death is a real atonement only for those who come to him, and not for all mankind. For, let us suppose ourselves to have lived before Jesus suffered on the cross; or, which is the same thing, let us suppose his blessed work to have been postponed till the end of time. Let us regard him as, from the beginning, waiting to receive accessions of individuals, from age to age, made willing to take him as their surety, and covenant head, and representative. Let us conceive of him as thus waiting to have the number of his seed actually made up, and all who are to receive salvation at his hands effectually called and united to him. Then, when the last soul is gathered in, and the entire multitude of the elect race who are to stand to him, as the second Adam, in the same relation in which the family of man stands to the first Adam that fell, is ascertained, not only in the eternal counsels of the Godhead, and the covenant between the Father and the Son, but in the actual result accomplished—then at last, the Son, on their behalf and in their stead, performs the work, in which, by anticipation, they had all been enabled to believe, and satis-

fies divine justice, and makes reconciliation for them all. Where, in such circumstances, would be the necessity of a general or unlimited reference in his atonement? No one called to believe, with the knowledge that Christ was to be the surety of believers alone, and in that character alone was to be ultimately nailed to the cross, could have any embarrassment on that account. There might still be difficulties in his way, arising out of the decree of election, or the special grace of the Holy Ghost; but the limitation of the work which Christ had yet to do, to those who, before he did it, should be found to be all that would ever consent to take him as their Saviour, could not, in such a case, occasion any hesitation. And is the case really altered, in this respect, when we contemplate the cross as erected in the middle, rather than at the end, of time? On the supposition we have ventured to make, there would be the same absolute certainty, as to the parties in whose stead Christ should ultimately make atonement, that there is now, as to those for whom he has made it; and yet it would be enough for every sinner to be assured, that he might freely believe on him for the remission of sins; and that, so believing, he would undoubtedly find himself among the number of those for whom, in due time, atonement would be made, and whom, for his own name's sake, God must needs justify, on that all-sufficient ground. Is it really any assurance less than this that we can give to the sinner now? Surely there is a strange fallacy here. The essential nature of this great transaction does not depend on the time of its

accomplishment. It would be a real propitiation for the sins of all who should ever take him as their surety, were it yet to be accomplished; it is all that, and nothing more, now that it is accomplished, eighteen hundred years ago. Nor is it practically more difficult to reconcile a limited atonement with a universal offer, in the one view than in the other. It is enough, in either view, to proclaim, that whosoever believeth in Jesus will assuredly find an efficacy in his blood to cleanse from all sin—an infinite merit in his righteousness, and an infinite fulness in his grace.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE supposition which we ventured to throw out, at the close of the last paper, is one which we are inclined to resume, and which, unless we are mistaken, may be found to carry in its bosom, or in its train, not a few of the elementary truths needed, for a settlement of this whole dispute.

Let it be assumed, then, that instead of being accomplished during the fifth millennium of man's existence in the world, the incarnation, obedience, death, and resurrection of Christ, stood postponed till the end of all; and that now, with a fuller revelation, perhaps, than the Old Testament saints had, of the precise nature of the ordained and appointed salvation, we were, like them, in the position of expectation, looking forward to the work of atonement, as still to come. This cannot be regarded as a presumptuous or irreverent supposition. For certain purposes, and in a certain view, the death of Christ is ante-dated in Scripture, and he is spoken of as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Rev. xiii. 8.) It is no bold fiction, or mere figure of speech, that

thus assigns an era to this event, so remote from that of history. The truth is, the event itself, like the Godhead concerned in it—the everlasting Father ordaining and accepting, the only begotten Son undertaking and accomplishing, and the eternal Spirit sealing and applying it—is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” It has properly, therefore, no date, and if, on this principle, it may be held to have taken place “from before the foundation of the world,” it is not doing any violence to its reality, or taking any undue liberty with its sacredness, to conceive of it as delayed till the world’s close. In fact, we may thus test, to speak with reverence, the precise import of the cross, by planting it at different epochs in the lapse of ages, and observing what one aspect it invariably presents—what one voice or utterance it uniformly gives forth.

We are to conceive, therefore, of the atonement as still future; and we are to inquire how far, and in what way, this conception of it may seem at all to throw light on some of the various questions which have been raised regarding it, especially on those which relate to the offer of salvation, on the part of God, and the acceptance of it, on the part of the sinner.

Thus, in the first place, let the *gospel offer* be viewed in connection with an atonement yet to be made; as preceding, not following, the actual accomplishment of redemption; and let us see if, either in its freeness or in its fulness, it is at all affected by the transposi-

tion. The *freeness* of the offer, as an offer made in good faith, unreservedly and unconditionally to all, might seem at first sight to be, in this way, more clearly, intelligibly, and satisfactorily brought out than on the present footing; an air of greater contingency is imparted to the whole transaction; room is left, as it were, and opportunity is reserved, to use a Scottish legal phrase, to “add and eke;” the promised and still future atonement, beheld afar off, bulks in the sinner’s eye as a provision or scheme of grace capable of expansion and of adjustment, which, if more should ultimately be found willing to be embraced in it than were from the first anticipated, may yet be made so much wider as to take them in; and, in short, it appears possessed of an elastic capacity of enlargement, instead of being fixed, stereotyped, and confined. But, even on this theory, it would be no general or universal atonement; nor any general or universal reference in the atonement, that the sinner would be encouraged to look forward to, or that he would feel to be suitable to his case. On the contrary, to preserve the integrity and good faith of the offer, in respect of its *fulness* as well as its *freeness*—to give it, in fact, any worth or value—it must even then be an offer connected with a limited atonement after all. For what, in the case supposed, must be the actual benefit freely presented to all? What must be the assurance given? How must the tenor of the gospel message run? Surely to this effect: that whosoever, understanding and approving of the divine plan, yet to be accomplished, gave his consent

and avowed his willingness to acquiesce in it, might rely on finding himself comprehended at last in a work of propitiation and substitution adequate to the expiation of all his sins, and the complete fulfilment of all righteousness on his behalf; on the faith of which atonement, yet in prospect, he might, by anticipation, be presently accepted in the Beloved, and have peace in believing, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Still, most manifestly, the offer made to him must be the offer of an interest in a limited atonement. Explaining to such a one, in such circumstances, the principle of this method of salvation, its bearing on the honour of the divine character, and its adaptation to the necessities of the sinner's condition, you would set before him the Saviour hereafter to be revealed; and enlarging on the dignity and wondrous mystery of his person, the depth of his humiliation, the merit of his voluntary obedience, the infinite value of his penal sufferings and death—all as yet future—what would you say next? or how would you seek to apply all this to the hearer or the inquirer himself? Would you tell him of any general references and aspects in this vast mediatorial undertaking? Would you speak of any universal, or vague, or indefinite relation which, in all this work, the Saviour was appointed, or might be held, to sustain to mankind at large? Nay, would you not be prompt and eager to disavow all such generalities, and to fix and fasten on the very limitation of the work, as the precise feature in it to which it was most important to give heed? It is to be all, you would say, a work of suretyship, in

the strictest sense, and of suretyship exclusively; He who is to finish it—is in the undertaking and accomplishing of it, to sustain no relation whatever to any but his own people: he is so literally to identify himself with them, and them with himself, that all their sin is to be his, and all his righteousness is to be theirs; and it is in no other character than that of their representative, and with no reference to any but them, that he is to pour out his soul as an offering for sin. If you held the doctrine of the atonement at all, you could not fail, in the circumstances which we have supposed, to announce it to sinners of mankind, in some such terms as we have indicated. And you would do so without embarrassment. You would feel no difficulty in preaching such a gospel, then; and you would hold it to be the freest and fullest of all possible offers or proclamations, that you made, when pointing to this atonement, which you confessed, or rather boasted, would be a restricted atonement—from its very nature a restricted, because a real and effectual, atonement—you summoned all men everywhere to believe and be saved.

Now, how is this to be accounted for? How is it that, on the supposition of the atonement being yet future, it would seem so much easier to reconcile the universality of the gospel offer with the restriction or limitation of Christ's work, than on the other supposition, which has now been realized, and become matter of fact, of its being a transaction already past? It were well, we cannot but think, if this question were seriously pondered; for we have a deep persuasion

that it might arrest not a few earnest and inquisitive minds, who, having got entangled in the difficulties in which this subject is involved, as it touches the throne of God (which clouds and darkness must ever surround), are seeking relief and a door of escape, in the other direction, by taking liberties with it at the point at which it touches the hearts and consciences of men. This inquiry which we have now suggested might show them whither they are tending, and what is but too likely to be the issue of that state of mind which they are cherishing. For, what makes the difference between the two cases, as we have put them—the hypothetical and the actual? Or, is there any real difference? None whatever, unless you introduce the element of contingency. We have already observed that there is the appearance of this contingency in the view of a postponed, more than in that of a past, atonement—that the former seems to leave more scope and room than the latter for the discretionary exercise of divine grace, and the free play of the human will. But unless there be the reality, as well as the appearance, of this greater contingency, under the economy of a postponed, rather than of a past atonement, the ease or relief which one feels in passing, in imagination, from the one to the other, is wholly delusive, and is such, moreover, as to indicate a very dangerous turn of thought, and a sort of embryo-heretical pravity of disposition. For, let me interrogate myself: Am I conscious that I find it a simpler thing, and less revolting to my natural understanding, to conceive of Christ's work as undertaken

and accomplished for his people alone, when I try to view it prospectively, than when I look upon it in the way of retrospect? What makes it so? It must be some lurking idea, that, under the former system, matters are not quite so fixed as under the latter. Ah! then, it is really electing love and sovereign efficacious grace that I must get rid of; for, if the eternal decree of election, and the utter impotency of man without a sovereign operation of grace within him, be held equally under both systems, there is really no more uncertainty or capability of enlargement under the one than under the other. It is high time for me, on seeing this to stop short, lest I find myself carried on, as so many have been, along this fatally inclined plane, from less to more, to a denial of special grace altogether. For thus men, leaning to unsound views, improve one upon another; and, following out more and more fearlessly the legitimate consequences of incipient error, they come boldly to proclaim an extent of aberration from the truth, from which they, or their masters, would once have recoiled. Hence, what germinates as an isolated and uncongenial anomaly, on the surface of some otherwise well-cultivated mind—springing out of some peculiar influence that does not, perhaps, materially affect the general crop of good grain and abundant spiritual fruit—grows, in course of time, and spreads and swells out, till all the fair foliage is choked, and the sound seed is wellnigh expelled from the soil. For, as in the case before us, when a man seeking relief from the perplexity of the one great insoluble problem, thinks he has found it in

denying or explaining away the limited extent of the atonement—and when he discovers, as he, or his disciple, bettering his example, will soon do, that the relief, so long as he stops short there, is but delusive and apparent—the same impatience of mystery or difficulty which unsettled his views at first, carries him on a step further, until nearly all that is peculiar and precious, either in God's love, or in Christ's work, or in the Spirit's grace, is sacrificed to the demand which men vainly make for a gospel that may enable them to save themselves, instead of that which announces the salvation of God.

But, to return from this digression, we may ask, on the other hand, if the putting of this case, as to the supposed postponement of Christ's work, should not go far to satisfy those who object to the doctrine of a limited atonement, on the ground of its alleged inconsistency with the good faith of a universal gospel offer, that this objection, at least, is really groundless? You perceive that, if the work of Christ were yet to be accomplished, it would fall to be announced as a work restricted to those who should ultimately be found to constitute the entire number of his believing people. That number being supposed to be made up, previous to his coming in the flesh, you would never dream of his death being anything more than an atonement for *their* sins, and the bringing in of a perfect righteousness on *their* behalf. You might say, indeed, that meanwhile, the fact of that death being, if we may so speak, due, was one in which not only those ulti-

mately saved, but the world at large, had an interest; inasmuch as it procured for all, that season of providential forbearance, together with those universal calls, and influences, and opportunities of grace, which otherwise would not have been vouchsafed to any. This, however, as you must at once see, on the supposition now made, would appear to be plainly a consequence, not of his death on the cross, but of his being destined to die; or, in other words, it would be evidently connected, not with the proper virtue or efficacy of his atonement at all, but simply with its certainty, as an event yet to occur. Were it to turn out, at last, that only a single individual had been persuaded and enabled to become a believer in the promised Saviour, so that he needed to lay down his life for none, save for that single individual alone, still the appointment of his death, though restricted, in its reference, to one solitary soul, would be a sufficient explanation of the forbearance granted to all, and the offer made to all; for still, all along, and even at the very instant of his ascending the cross, all might be most honestly assured, that if they were but willing, *their* sins also would be expiated on the tree. We might thus conceive of the Redeemer as standing from generation to generation, among the successive millions of the children of men—testifying to them all that he has been ordained to become the substitute of all sinners, without exception, who choose to accept of him in that capacity, and that he delays the execution of the work he

has to do till the end of all things, for the express purpose of allowing full time to all to make their choice. The announcement he has to make is, from the very nature of the case, the announcement of a limited atonement: the decease which he is to accomplish, as he must in faithfulness warn them all, is to have no general reference whatsoever: he is not in any sense to obey, or suffer, or die, for any but his own people: the efficacy of his propitiation, as well as its design, is to be strictly and exclusively theirs: and still, as age after age rolls on, may he be seen, down to the last moment, plying each one of the mighty multitude of the guilty—almost lingering as he takes his appointed place, at last, under the broken law and the impending curse—Thy surety, also, would I gladly be, if thou wouldst suffer me, thine, as well as this thy neighbour's, who was not less guilty than thou; thy sins would I willingly bear, as well ^{as} his; yet once more consider, ere I go on my heavy and bloody work; shall I go in thy stead, as well as in his?—as substitute for thee, as well as for him? Choose before it be too late—

Would this be a free gospel? Would this be an honest universal offer? It is connected, you perceive, with a limited atonement. Would it be of any value if it were not?

And does the accident of date so alter the essential nature of this great transaction—in which the parties are that eternal Father, who seeth the end from the beginning, and that well beloved Son, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever—as to make the re-

striction of it to his own people less consistent with a universal offer when it is set forth as past, than it would be, if announced as still future? Surely, if such an impression at any time prevail, one may say, in all humility, with the Psalmist: "This is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." (Ps. lxxvii. 10.)

CHAPTER IX.

PASSING now from the *offer*, on the part of God, to the *acceptance* of it, by faith, on the part of the sinner, which it was proposed, in the second place, to investigate, under this hypothesis or supposition of a postponed atonement, we may dispense with any renewed and formal discussion of the three particulars already disposed of, *namely*, (I.) the office or function; (II.) the nature; and (III.) the warrant of that faith which is required for the appropriation of the gift of God; for these are not very directly affected by this test;—and we may proceed at once to the only remaining topic, and consider,

IV. The source and origin of this faith, by which sinners become interested in the work of Christ. And here, let us, *first*, bring our imaginary, but yet potent, criterion to bear on the precise point at issue. Let Christ be presented to us, not as having accomplished the work of redemption, but as appointed and ordained to accomplish it, whensoever the number of those willing to have it undertaken and accomplished by him, on their behalf, shall have been

ascertained. It is to be assumed that we have all the knowledge that we at present possess of the person of Christ and the nature^e of his work, as a work implying the substitution of himself instead of, or the identification of himself with, a peculiar people, consenting to have him as their head. But an apparent contingency is allowed to rest, so far as man's judgment goes, on the precise number and actual names of the parties who are to be thus dealt with; although in the foreknowledge and decree of God, all is fixed. Still the matter seems to be simplified by the work, while yet unaccomplished, being thus thrown loose on mankind at large and indiscriminately; it looks like leaving the door more open. And in that view, scarcely any difficulty can be conceived of as arising on any of the questions regarding faith, which we have already had before us.

Thus let Christ be set forth as having the work of obedience and atonement yet to do. Then, as to the office or function of faith, it is plain that unless he is to save me against my will, he must have my consent or acquiescence; as to the nature of faith there must evidently also be not only a conviction of the understanding recognising his sufficiency, but a movement, moreover, of the will or the affections, or the choice of the heart, urging me to avail myself of his all-sufficient mediation; and as to the ground or warrant of faith, what more can be needed beyond his assurance, that if I choose to accept of him as my substitute, he will undertake to satisfy all claims, and meet all demands on my behalf? So far all is clear.

But now, as to the source or origin of faith, let the question be raised, on the hypothesis or supposition of a deferred propitiation, as to the causal priority, or precedency in respect of logical order—of faith to the new spiritual life, or of the new spiritual life, at least in its beginning, to faith. Let it be observed that, in the view we are now taking, the object of faith is not a past, but a future work of salvation; a present Saviour indeed, but one whose actual and effectual redemption of his people is still in prospect, and is necessarily, therefore, set before us under a contingent, and in a sense, a conditional aspect. It is my faith, however wrought in me, that must turn the contingent and conditional into the categorical and certain. It cannot, therefore, in such a case, be the understanding that commands the will, at least in the final act of faith, but the will that furnishes a guide or index to the understanding. For, so far as the conviction of the understanding is concerned, the proposition which I am to believe, if it is to be reduced to exact form, and expressed with intellectual precision, is not that my sins are expiated, but that they will be expiated, through my being now embraced and included among those whom, in his yet future work of propitiation, Christ is to represent. But evidently the truth of this proposition depends on my consent to be thus represented by him; and my assurance of its truth must turn upon my consciousness of the consent which I give. Thus, on the theory we are now imagining, for the sake of illustration, to be realized, there is no room for any in-

tellectual conviction, implying an appropriating interest in the work of Christ, except upon the footing of a previous act of the will, consenting to his suretyship, with all its consequences. But such consent, it will scarcely be denied, is the result of a divine operation, and is an exercise of the new spiritual life.

For the real question, on this closing branch of the subject, respects the precise nature of that state of mind in which faith originates, and out of which it arises. Some, indeed, might think it enough to have it acknowledged, in general terms, that "faith is the gift of God"—that "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost"—that salvation is "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (Eph. ii. 8; 1 Cor. xii. 3; 1 Thess. ii. 13): and, doubtless, to plain minds such plain statements as these suffice; nor, but for the subtle refining which has been resorted to, on this as on other points, for the covering of an ambiguous position, would anything more in the way of explanation have been necessary. For it is thus, for the most part, that the defence of the truth becomes complicated, and a prejudice is created against it, as if it turned upon mere word-catching and hair-splitting. The reason is, that persons verging, perhaps unconsciously, towards dangerous error, shrink from realizing, even to themselves, the full extent and actual tendency of their aberrations and peculiarities; and cling, with a sort of desperate tenacity, to the familiar formulas and expressions of a sound scriptural creed; with the sort of infatuation with which one struggling in the river's treacherous

calm, above the rapids, might convulsively grasp some landmark as he is drifted past, fancying himself there-upon to be stationary and safe, while he is only carrying the sign-post he has embraced, along with him, into the perilous and eddying navigation of the torrent. Hence it becomes necessary to follow them in their windings, and to recover, out of their hands, those simple statements of Holy Writ, which they so ingeniously mistify and pervert. In the present instance, a mere admission of the necessity of the Spirit's agency in order to the production and exercise of saving faith, may be very far from coming up to the full meaning of what, to persons inexperienced in the arts of controversy, the words would seem to imply.

Let us consider how very differently different men may understand that acknowledgment of dependence upon God, as the source alike of every good gift and of every good work, which they may all be ready, with a measure of honesty, to make.

Thus, that God is not far from every one of us, since in him we "live, and move, and have our being," is what even a heathen poet could feel and own, when he said, "For we are all his offspring." Every common function of the natural life may thus be said to be performed by the help of God. But a devout Theist, having an intelligent belief in a particular providence, will regard this as meaning far more than an Epicurean philosopher, with his notions of the retirement and repose of the great Creator, could admit. This last would ascribe to God the original contrivance of the curiously-wrought organ, or the subtle mental

power, by which the function is to be performed, as well as the adjustment of those general laws, of matter and of mind, under which all such operations are carried on; and in that sense he might recognise God as enabling him to draw in every fresh breath of air that swells his chest, and to eat every morsel that is to revive his exhausted frame; and so far, he might be grateful. But the other goes much further. Believing in the direct and immediate interposition of God, upholding all things and regulating all things, he believes literally that he can do nothing without God: and hence he is thankful to God, not merely for having made him, such as he is, and placed him under natural laws, such as they are, but for his concurrence, in the very act by which he puts forth his hand to touch, and opens his mouth to taste; without which concurrence, present and real, he could do neither.

Again, in the department of practical morality, there are many who hold that without God they can do nothing *good*; in a sense, too, more special than is implied in the acknowledgment that, without God, they can do nothing at all. For here, some weakness or derangement of the natural faculty is admitted; and the feeling is, that in every instance in which it is to be exercised, there must be the presence and concurrence of God, not merely that it may be enabled to act at all, but that it may be helped to act rightly. A pious moralist may thus maintain that man, left to himself, cannot form, or reform, his own character aright; nay, that he cannot, without the help of God,

think a good thought or speak a good word; and hence he will be ready to trace every good disposition and every good act to God, and to do so frankly and sincerely. But in all this there may be great vagueness and obscurity; it may be rather an indefinite impression with him, than an intelligent article of belief; and were he questioned particularly, he might be unable to explain what he meant. But, generally, his notion would seem to be this: that God is, as it were, to second or back the efforts of man, by some supplementary influence or aid from on high; that man, straining himself to the uttermost in the exercise of his moral faculties, of reason, conscience, and will, is helped on and helped out by some divine communication of additional light or power; as when I am blinding myself with intense looking into the depths of a vast cave, I am relieved by a friend putting a torch into my hand, or applying his glass to my eye; or when I am toiling up a steep ascent, breathless and ready to give way, I find a strong arm linked in mine, that carries me swiftly and pleasantly up the hill; or when I am suffering my resolution to be overborne by the flattery or the taunts of false friends, I am recalled to myself by the timely warning of a faithful brother.

Now, is it anything more than this that some mean, who seem to admit that faith is the gift of God, and that no man can believe but by the special grace and operation of the Holy Spirit, while yet they sensitively shrink from any explicit recognition of faith as being one of the fruits of the new birth, or the new crea-

tion, or the new spiritual life—of which, with strange perverseness, they would make it the instrumental cause? What more than this can they possibly mean? For there is, and can be, but one other sense in which the acknowledgment of divine help, or of a divine interposition, in the act or exercise of any faculty, can be understood; and that is, that the faculty itself is renewed—that it becomes, in fact, a new faculty. And can anything short of this exhaust the meaning of the scriptural testimonies on this subject? “Faith is the gift of God.” Does this mean nothing more than that God concurs with man, and is an auxiliary to him, in believing? How does the passage run? “By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves;”—how not of yourselves?—because God influences and helps you to believe?—not at all; but “it is the gift of God.” What *can* this mean, if it be not that God directly bestows the faculty or capacity of believing, and that, too, as a new faculty—a new capacity. He does not merely co-operate with man in this exercise or act of faith: but he gives it. And why should we take alarm at the idea of man receiving new faculties, that he may know God, and believe God? Why should we hesitate to say that it is a new understanding that apprehends, and a new heart that embraces, “the things of God”—“the things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man—the things which God hath prepared for them that love him?” (1 Cor. ii. 14, and 9). You say that in this new creation, there are no new powers imparted to man, beyond what he

naturally possesses, and no essential change is wrought in his constitution. If this mean that he continues to have the same number of powers that he had before, and these of the same kind as before—that he is still a man, and not an angel—that he has understanding, conscience, will, affections, such as are proper to a man, and such as he had before—that he knows, in the same manner as he did before, not for the most part intuitively, but through reason and discourse; and believes, in the same manner as he did before, upon evidence presented to him; and loves, in the same manner that he did before, from the sight of what is excellent and the sense of what is good—if this be what is meant when the protest is anxiously made against the new creation being supposed to imply any essential change of man's constitution, or the imparting to him of any new faculties—it is true, but it is little to the purpose. He has an eye, he has a heart, as he had before; but it is a new eye and a new heart: an eye and a heart as strictly new, as if the natural organs had been taken out and replaced by others entirely different; or as if, being taken out and thoroughly renovated, they were again restored to the frame to which they belonged, but restored, so changed from what they were before, as to make a new world all around, and a new world within.

Now, it is out of this new creation that faith springs: it is by this work or process that it is wrought in the mind and heart of the sinner; it is the act of a renewed understanding, a renewed will, and a renewed heart. If it be not—if it be not the fruit of that new

life which the soul receives in the commencement of the new birth or new creation, but in any sense its cause or instrument—then it is idle to say that it is the gift of God, or that no man can believe but by the Holy Ghost; for, at the very utmost, this can really mean nothing more than that the Spirit must be concurring and aiding in the act of faith, as he might be held to concur and aid in any act, for which man has a certain measure of ability, that needs only to be supplemented and helped out. Is this the sense in which it is meant that the Spirit is the author of faith? If not—and they whom we have in our eye will probably feel that this is much too low a sense—then what intermediate sense is there between that, and the new creation or regeneration? Or in what other way can the Spirit be conceived of as originating faith, excepting in one or other of these two—either in the way of helping, or in the way of causing, man to believe; either in the way of mere auxiliary influence, or in the way of creating anew, and imparting new life? What is man's natural state, apart from the Spirit's work, in reference to his ability to believe? Is he partly, but not quite, able to believe? Has he some intellectual and moral power tending in that direction, not indeed sufficient to carry him on to the desired landing-place of faith, but such as, with a certain concurrent and assisting operation of the Spirit—falling short of a new creation, however, or the imparting of new life—may be stretched out so as to reach that end? Or is he wholly devoid of all that even tends in the line of faith? Is he altogether

“without strength?” (Rom. v. 6.) And must faith be in him, not merely an improvement on some natural act of his mind, but an act entirely and radically new? Is it with him an old thing amended, or a new thing, to believe God?

Need we say what the scriptural reply must be? If the Spirit is the source and author of faith at all, it must be in his character of the quickening, the regenerating, the creating Spirit. Otherwise, if it be in any other character that he produces faith, or by any other process than what that character involves, there is no reason why all other grace and goodness may not be implanted in the soul, and matured there, by the mere co-operation of God with man, in the use of his natural ability, without anything that can be properly called a new birth or new creation for the imparting of new life at all; for if a man can believe before the essential work or process of regeneration, or his being made alive, is begun and in full progress, he may equally well, in that state, acquire any other good quality, or perform any other good work.

But we must close this argument, and, indeed, this whole series of arguments; and we may do so by noticing one or two difficulties that may be started on the other side.

1. Do we set aside Christ in this view which we take of the source and origin of faith? as if we maintained that the first germ, at least, of the new spiritual life was imparted by a process irrespective of Christ's work and word—so that a man might be said

to have life without having Christ? (1 John v. 12.) There might be something in this, if the quickened soul had far to seek, or long to wait, for Christ—if, in my new birth, opening my new eyes to look, and my new and feeble arms to grasp, I had still to say—“Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is to bring Christ down from above); or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is to bring up Christ again from the dead.)” But it is not so. “The word is nigh me, even in my mouth and in my heart” (Rom. x. 8); so nigh, that the very first cry of my new and faltering tongue is to confess Christ; for he is “in my mouth,” and I find him there (ibid. ver. 9; Ps. viii. 2); and the very first pulse of my new and trembling bosom beats against my Saviour’s breast; for he is “in my heart,” and there, too, I find him. In the very agony of my birth-struggle, I have Christ—very near, in close contact, giving himself to me; and awakening from that long dream that has been my death, I awake, with Christ’s voice ringing in my ear, Christ’s blessed image filling my eye, and Christ’s word in my inmost soul. What separation is there here, between the possession of spiritual life and the possession of Christ? I live not before having Christ, but in having Christ. My new life is through him, and with him, and in him. Yet it is the Spirit that quickeneth; and being quickened, I have Christ near, and life in him.

2. Do we disparage faith, as if we called in question the great doctrine of salvation through faith? Surely, if it be held that salvation is through faith in such a sense as to imply that this faith is not itself

a part of the salvation—of which redemption by the shedding of Christ's blood, and regeneration by the operation of the Holy Ghost, are the sole causes—the one of its purchase, and the other of its application—any such imagination we set altogether aside. But while faith is ever to be magnified, as opposed to all works of man, in the salvation of the sinner, it never can be the antagonist of any work of God, whether of God the Son, or of God the Holy Ghost. We thus degrade faith itself, bringing it down from its high position, as the link of union between God and man, into the class of those righteousnesses of ours, which are as filthy rags. Thus, in justification, make faith, instead of obedience, the ground of acceptance; and what worthiness has it? or what stability? None whatever, more than those other works which it supersedes. But put the work of Christ in that position; and let Faith take her proper place as a hand-maid, meekly waiting on Christ, and taking his work as her own; she becomes omnipotent—she can remove mountains. So also, in regeneration; if you insist on faith being the cause or instrument of the change, or being in any way antecedent to the new life which the process of the new birth gives, you establish, as the measure of that great change, and that glorious life, something to which man's ability is competent, or with divine help, can reach, before he is changed or made alive. For the effect must be proportioned to the agency and the instrumentality together; and in this view, therefore, regeneration must be according to the measure of faith—not faith

according to the measure of regeneration. But take it the other way. Then, in regeneration, on the imparting of the new life, you have an agency that creates anew, and an instrumentality that liveth and abideth for ever—the agency of the quickening Spirit, and the instrumentality of the unchanging Word; and the fruit, or result, is faith, according to the living energy of the Holy Ghost, and the enduring steadfastness of the divine testimony. What a principle of power and patience have we now in the faith that is thus produced, corresponding, as it must do, if real, to the might of its heavenly cause and the massive strength of its heavenly instrumentality! It is truly a divine principle. This faith is a divine act; implying the inward communication of a divine capacity, concurring with the instrumentality of a divine testimony. Thus, literally, with the Psalmist, may the believer say: “In thy light shall we see light.” (Ps. xxxvi. 9.) For, through His divine power, working in me a divine faith, I see Christ with the eye with which the Father sees him; I hold him as the Father holds him; and love him as the Father loves him. He is mine, by a work of the Spirit in me, precisely similar to that by which, in his mediatorial character, he is the Father’s; for I am born of the Spirit, as Christ was.

3. Do we cast any slight or discouragement on human efforts, or give any sanction to the relaxation of diligence, or the diminution of anxiety, on the part of the sinner, seeking the salvation of his soul? Here, let us face, at once, this imputation, by comparing, as

to their tendency in this respect, the two different ways in which the divine interposition, in the actings of his creatures, may be represented. For the sake of distinction, we may characterize them, as the auxiliary and the creative methods, respectively. According to the first, God is regarded as co-operating with man; according to the second, he is to be viewed as requiring man to co-operate with him.

This, as it seems to us, is an important distinction; on which, indeed, turns the practical question, whether man is to have the precedency or God, in the work of individual salvation. The types, so to speak, of the two opposite theories, may be found in the instance of the impotent man beside the pool of Bethesda. (John v. 1-9.) Contrast his own complaint: "I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool," with the Saviour's command to him: "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." The Lord might have adopted the plan which the man himself suggested; he might have rewarded his long waiting and his many previous attempts, by helping him to the side of the pool; and supported and aided by so strong an arm, the tottering invalid might have succeeded, at last, in curing himself, by the use of the mysteriously troubled waters. But God's ways are not as our ways. Jesus proceeds otherwise in his work of healing. He will not merely fall in, as an auxiliary, in the carrying out of man's plans and efforts; he will take the lead, as assuming the whole matter into his own hands; he issues his order, and the man, believing, is healed. Now, on both of these plans, there

is co-operation; but on the first, the Lord is expected to co-operate with the man; on the second, he requires the man to co-operate with him. Need we ask which of these two arrangements is the most becoming and the most blessed?—becoming, as regards God—blessed, as regards man.

Now, throughout, in the first step, and in the whole subsequent progress, of the life of God in the soul of man, the position or attitude which man has to take is that of acquiescence; he is to fall in with what God proposes; he is to be a fellow-worker with God. His own idea constantly is, that God is to concur with him, so as to help him out, where there is any deficiency in his attainments, and help him on where there is any failure in his strength; and that, upon his doing his best, God is to make up what may be wanting, and have a tender consideration for what may be weak; and so, the righteousness of Christ being virtually supplemental to his own sincere yet imperfect obedience, and the assistance of the Spirit seconding his own honest though infirm resolution, he is to be somehow, on an adjustment of accounts, and with a due allowance for human frailty, justified and sanctified at last. Need we say that the whole of this motley and mongrel system must be overturned and reversed? It is the very opiate of a drowsy spirit; deadening all energy, and lulling asleep all care. How different from this is the plan of God!

Take a believer in the middle of his course. What is he doing?—"working out his own salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God that worketh

in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 12, 13);—not trying to make himself holy, by the help of God—as another man might vaguely express it—but realizing God himself within, making him holy; and under this impression, following out what God is doing. It is the Christian paradox; to feel myself passive, in the hands of God, and yet on that very account the more intensely active—moved unresistingly by God, like the most inert instrument or machine, yet for that very reason all the more instinct with life and motion; my whole moral frame and mechanism possessed and occupied by God, and worked by God, yet through that very working, made to apprehend more than ever its own liberty and power. This is the true freedom of the will of man; namely, that it becomes the engine for working out the will of God.

And does not the same order hold in the beginning of the divine life? Here, too, is it not through our being passive, that we reach and realize the only true activity? Is it said that, by telling men that faith is the act of a living soul, and that they cannot believe but by the impulse of a new life—a life such as the creating and regenerating Spirit alone can impart—we encourage them to shut their eyes, and fold their hands, and sit down in listless and indolent expectancy, waiting for, they know not what? Miserably shallow theology! and, if possible, still more meagre metaphysics! Call a man to believe, and let him imagine that his believing is some step which, with a little supernatural help, he may reach, as a preliminary to his new life with

God; then, he may take his ease, and, to a large extent, use his discretion, as to the time and manner of obeying the call. But let him know that this faith is the effect or fruit of an exercise of divine power, such as raises the dead and gives birth to a new man; that his believing, is seeing Christ with a new eye, which God must give, and grasping Christ with a new hand, which God must nerve, and cleaving to Christ with a new heart, which God must put within him; and let it be thundered in his ear, that for all this work of God, “now is the accepted time and now is the day of salvation;”—then, fairly startled and made to know what faith is, as the act of a living soul, and what is its source, even the present power of the quickening Spirit, will he not be moved to earnestness and energy in “seeking the Lord while he may be found, and calling upon him while he is near?” And is it not this urgent impression, alike of the heavenly nature, and the heavenly origin of faith, which prompts both the profession and prayer—“Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief?”

This great theme is yet very far indeed from being exhausted. In fact, we may say, with truth, it is little more than one single feature in the atonement that we have attempted to exhibit, in various points of view. That feature is its COMPLETENESS, as securing all blessings to those who embrace it. They are complete in Him. For this end we have endeavoured to bring out the full meaning of Christ’s work, as a real and literal substitution of himself in the room

and stead of his people, and also the full meaning of the Spirit's work, as that which gives them a supernatural sight of Christ, and a supernatural hold of Christ. Seeing Christ with the new eye which the Spirit purges, grasping him with the new hand which the Spirit strengthens, believing all the divine testimony, with that clear intelligence which belongs to the renewed mind, and that eager consent which the renewed heart hastens to give—I am Christ's, and Christ is mine; I become a partaker of the divine nature; for as Christ is, so am I. The completeness of the atonement, as regards all who embrace it, we have sought also to harmonize with the universality of the gospel offer, as being the free offer of a full interest in that atonement, to every individual of the human race. For thus the matter stands. A crowd of criminals, guilty and depraved, are kept in prison, waiting for the day of doom. What is my office, as a preacher of righteousness, among them? Is it to convey to them from my Master any universal proclamation of pardon, or any intimation whatever of anything purchased or procured by him for them all indiscriminately? Is it to carry a bundle of reprieves, endorsed with his sign-manual, which I am to scatter over the heads of the miscellaneous multitude, to be scrambled for at random, or picked up by whosoever care to stoop for them? That, certainly, is not my message; that is not my gospel. They are not thus to be dealt with collectively and *en masse*; nor are they to be fed with such mere crumbs of comfort from the Lord's table. The Lord himself is at hand, and my

business is to introduce him to you, that individually, and one by one, you may deal with him, and suffer him to deal with you. It is now, as it was in the days before the flood. The ark is a preparing; for, though prepared, from all eternity, in the counsels of the Godhead, and now also prepared, in point of fact, in time, it is, to all intents and purposes, as if it were a preparing for us. Does it seem too straitened?—too small? Doubt not, sinner, that there will be room enough in it for all that choose to enter; have no fear but that there is room enough for thee. For, to sum up all, in the words of an old writer, take, O sinner, whosoever thou art, this assurance, “that there is mercy enough in God, and merit enough in Christ, and power enough in the Spirit, and scope enough in the promises, and room enough in heaven,” for thee, brother, and—blessed be God, also for me.

APPENDIX.

NOTE A.—Page 2.

Extract from Bicentenary Address—Vindication of Creeds—Difference between such as preceded and such as followed the Reformation.

THE following is the passage in the Bicentenary Address which gave occasion, in the manner now explained, to these papers. I insert it with some satisfaction, inasmuch as, on reviewing it, after an interval, and upon a fuller consideration of the subject, I am not disposed to recognise any such serious error or defect of statement, as could fairly warrant the use said to be made of it, in support of the notion of a general or universal atonement. I still think that an inadequate view of the nature of saving faith lies at the root of much of the crude heresy that has been vented in regard to this department of theology. The naked intellectual view of faith, as I have endeavoured to explain in one of the chapters of this work, may possibly be held, isolated from what seem to be its legitimate consequences; and may seem to simplify the plan of salvation. I believe it may have been thus held by such men as the late Dr Stewart of the Canongate.* But I have a

* See his *Treatise on Faith*, republished by Dr John Brown.

strong impression that it was this theory of faith, ingeniously defended, that led, *first*, To the devising of a sense in which Christ might be regarded as having died for all, while, really, he died as the substitute of the elect only; *secondly*, To the idea of his death being, in its own nature, equally for all, though limited, in its application, by the purpose of God, and the necessity of the work of the Spirit; and, *thirdly*, To the notion of its being designed for all; and of its depending on the free will of man, under the common influence of the Spirit, to render it effectual.

The only points on which, in reprinting this extract, I would now wish to guard myself, are these two:—*first*, As to the use of such phraseology as, “a certain reference to all men universally,”—I would now be more cautious, knowing more than I did then of its current value in recent controversy; and, *secondly*, I would explain more fully than I did then, as I have attempted to do in these papers, the sense in which this “reference” can be said to “lay the foundation for the universal offer of the gospel.” I am disposed to rest the universal offer on the mere command of God; connecting it with the atonement in no other way than as the atonement—confessedly all-sufficient and of infinite value—manifests the good-will of God to men generally, and is a pledge to every man, individually, of his being saved, in Christ, if he will but believe.

I have prolonged the extract, for the sake of a view contained in it, which I would delight to have the opportunity and means of expanding and illustrating—that of the contrast between the creeds that preceded, and the confessions that followed, the Reformation:—

“The usual objection made to the use of human standards, creeds, and confessions, in connection with the unity of the Church, is, that creeds and confessions embrace so wide a field, and contain so many minute statements of

doctrine, that it is impossible to expect a hearty and unanimous concurrence in these various points on the part of all true believers. Now, suffice it to say, in the first place, in answer to these objections, that as these standards are intended to shut out error, so it must be borne in mind that, in proportion to the consistency and harmony of the truth of God, is the all-pervading subtlety of the errors of Satan. The truth of God is perfectly harmonious, and is one complete whole. All the parts of it fit into one another, and are mutually dependent upon each other; and as this edifice, so reared by God, is complete and compact in all its parts, so the subtle influence of Satan is often applied to the undermining of one part of the building, in the knowledge that if he should succeed, he can scarcely fail to effect the destruction of all the rest. We might illustrate this by showing how error, in what at first sight may appear an unimportant point, ruins the whole system, and essentially affects the whole doctrines of the gospel. It may seem, for instance, that the dispute regarding the precise nature of saving faith is a comparatively unimportant point, and one on which Christian men may afford to differ; and yet an error on this point might easily be shown to affect the doctrines of God's sovereignty, of human depravity, the extent and nature of the atonement, and justification by faith alone. We might show, for example, that those who make justification by faith to consist in the belief of the fact that they are pardoned—who maintain that a man must believe that Christ died personally for him as an individual—are compelled necessarily to adopt a mode of statement in regard to the bearing of Christ's death upon all men indiscriminately, and particularly upon the lost, which strikes at the root of the doctrine of personal substitution altogether, and makes it difficult, if not impossible, to believe that Christ actually suffered in the very room and stead of guilty sinners them-

selves. According to the admirable definition of faith in the Shorter Catechism, in which it is described as "a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation," it is unnecessary to define the precise relation which the death of Christ has to mankind universally, and its precise bearing on the condition of the finally impenitent and the lost; for that the death of Christ has a certain reference to all men universally—that it has a certain bearing even upon the lost—we must hold and maintain; because we maintain that it lays the foundation for the offer of the gospel to all men universally, and lays the foundation for that offer being perfectly honest and free on the part of God. This could not be without some sort of relation existing between the death of Christ, and every impenitent and unbelieving man who is called to receive the gospel. What may be the nature of that relation—what may be the precise bearing of Christ's death on every individual of the lost, we presume not to define. And we say that it is unnecessary to define it; for we do not ask the sinner to believe in the precise definition of that relation respecting himself. We say that even if the sinner could put into articulate language his theory of the precise bearing of the death of Christ on himself, and his belief in it, he would still be an unreconciled sinner, unless he closed with the offer of the gift of God. This relieves and exempts us from the necessity of prying too curiously into the relation between Christ's death and impenitent and unbelieving sinners, to whom God has made a free, and unconditional, and honest offer of the blessings of reconciliation. According to the view of faith laid down in the Shorter Catechism—which makes faith virtually to consist in closing with God's gift—we are exempted from the necessity of stating, in the form of a proposition, what is the precise relation between the death of Christ and all mankind; and so we are left free to maintain that while,

in a certain sense, unknown to us, but the effect of which is well known to us, namely, that it constitutes the foundation for a free offer of the gospel—while, in a certain sense, Christ's death has a bearing on the condition of the lost and impenitent, yet, in a strict sense, he was really, truly, and personally, a substitute in the room of the elect, and in the room of the elect only. On the other hand, if I hold the doctrine that faith is the belief of a certain fact, concerning Christ's death and my interest in it—that it is mere belief of a certain definite proposition, such as that Christ died for me—I am compelled to make out a proposition concerning Christ's death, which shall hold true equally of believers and unbelievers, the reprobate and the saved; which proposition I am to believe, simply as a matter of fact, necessarily true, whether I believe it or not. But how is this to be done? I am to believe that Christ died for me, and I must believe this in a sense which shall be true independently of my belief—which shall be equally true of me whether I am saved or lost. Does not this compel me to make Christ's dying for me, though I should be one of the chosen, amount really to nothing more than what is implied in his dying for the finally reprobate? Accordingly, it is to be observed, that those who take this view of saving faith carefully avoid the use of any language respecting the atonement which would involve the notion of personal substitution. They do not like to speak of Christ being put actually in the room of sinners, considered as personally liable to wrath. They use a variety of abstract and impersonal phrases—such as, Christ's dying for sin—his death being a scheme for removing obstacles to pardon—manifesting God's character—and other expressions, all studiously general and indefinite, and evading the distinct and articulate statement of Christ's death as a substitute in the very room and stead of guilty sinners

themselves. We might extend our illustrations, and show how the scheme of the sovereign mercy of God—the entire, total, helpless corruption of man—the utter impotency of man's will—the perfection of God's righteousness—the freeness of God's grace—the simplicity and child-like nature of faith—how all these things are intimately associated together, so that unsoundness in one runs through all; and, indeed, we may say of every error that, if traced to its ultimate source, it will be found to take its rise in a denial of the doctrine which is the leading characteristic of the Westminster Standards—the doctrine of the absolute sovereignty of God.

“There is another remark which it occurs to me to make on this point, and it is one peculiarly referring to the composition of the Westminster Standards. It is this, that we may be reconciled to the minute and systematic form of the Westminster Confession, if we observe the marked distinction that exists between the composition of the Protestant Standards and those articles of faith that were framed before the Reformation. One mark of distinction may be mentioned in a single phrase—that the creeds before the Reformation were framed when the Church was on her way to the cell of the monk, while the creeds since the Reformation were framed when the Church was on her way out of the monk's cell. The creeds and confessions of the Church before the Reformation were framed in the spirit of a Church which was making rapid progress towards this as the highest possible attainment—the asceticism of the monkish state—a morbid, laborious, and painful system of self-righteousness; whereas, on the other hand, the glory of the Reformation, and the leading excellence of the creeds of the Reformation, was, that all were framed in the spirit of a Church taking a start, as it were, from the dark cell of that deep spiritual distress and sore conflict of soul through which the disenthralled spirit of Luther was en-

abled to escape from the trammels of self-righteousness, and to lay hold of the righteousness of God. In the creeds before the Reformation, such as the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian creeds, we find the Church drawn to frame articles respecting abstruse, difficult, and sacred mysteries, and the incomprehensible doctrine of the divine nature, at a time when she was losing hold of the practical doctrine of the sinner being accepted as righteous before God, through no works of his own, but only through his faith in the work of God; and we might say in reference to this, as our Lord said to Nicodemus: "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" (John iii. 12.) They pried into the secrets of heaven; they attempted to penetrate into the mysterious being of the unsearchable God; at the very time when they were setting their hearts upon a righteousness of their own, in open defiance of the righteousness of God, in the matter of their own personal justification, which might and should have been within the cognizance of their personal experience on earth. This will probably explain the abstract, mystical, cold and unimpressive character of the creeds that were drawn up before the Reformation. On the other hand, Luther, making his escape from the deep experience of a soul convinced of its own utter impotency before God—Luther making his escape from his experience of legal convictions of sin—Luther rejoicing in the light of God's reconciled countenance—Luther rejoicing in the righteousness of God his Saviour—carried this spirit of life, and love, and liberty, into all the confessions that were subsequently framed; and all these confessions, accordingly, however minute and detailed, will be found to be no technical and scholastic exercise in abstract and abstruse theories of theology, but the consistent unfolding of the one practical and experimental scheme of the sinner's acceptance, by

sovereign grace in perfect righteousness, through a simple and saving faith.

“These remarks may be regarded as suggesting a reason for, and reconciling us to, the minuteness and complication of character of the confessions of Protestant Churches, and especially of the Westminster Standards. But we have one answer to make of a practical character, and it is to this effect—that amidst all the varieties of mind and opinion of the Westminster Assembly, there was an entire unanimity as to the system of doctrine; thus affording the strongest of all proofs that it is quite possible for Christian men, by prayer and consultation together, to come to an agreement, not only on the broad general principles, but even on the details of the Christian system, so that they may be of one mind and heart, not only on certain general propositions, but on the whole tenor of their confessions.”

NOTE B.—P. 4.

The long-suffering of God—Interpretation of Rom. iii. 25, 26.

In the passage quoted (Rom. iii. 25, 26), we seem to find the dispensation of long-suffering patience, and the dispensation of saving mercy, equally ascribed to the interposition of Christ and his finished work. It is intimated that “God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness;” which is explained in the following verse to mean his justice: “That he might be just,” or might be declared, or seen, to be just—that the righteousness of his administration might be vindicated and magnified. Two things are thereafter represented as calling for that vindication—two aspects of his providence in dealing with men—which otherwise must appear anomalies and inconsistencies.

The first is, his "passing over sins that are past, through forbearance." (Verse 25, *marginal reading*.) The second is, "his justifying him that believeth in Jesus." (Verse 26.) His past exercise of forbearance, and his present ministry of justification, are the two acts which might seem to impeach the rectitude of his moral government, and to touch the sanctions of his law, but for his "setting forth" or foreordaining (verse 25, *marginal reading*) "Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood."

The distinction here made, is, in the first instance, between the general character of God's treatment of men before Christ came into the world, and the peculiar grace of the gospel dispensation. The former is elsewhere described by this same apostle as a sort of connivance, on the part of God, in comparison with the urgency and universality of his subsequent appeal: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." In these "times past, he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways" (Acts xiv. 16); whereas now, he would have all men to "turn from lying vanities unto the living God." (Ibid., verse 15). But it is plain that even thus viewed, the distinction in question turns, not on the dates of these dispensations of forbearance and of justification respectively, nor on the era of transition from a period when the former prevailed to a period characterized by the prominence of the latter, but on their difference from one another in respect of God's twofold manner of dealing with the children of men,—showing forbearance to all, and justifying them that believe. We are to remember, also, that before Christ's coming, though the leading feature of God's providence was his letting men alone, he never left himself without a witness, and he always had a ministry of justification going on; while, since that time, though his appointment is more clear and unequivocal, that an aggressive system is to be

plied towards the whole world—whose inhabitants, instead of being let alone, and having their “times of ignorance winked at,” and being “suffered to walk in their own ways,” are all to be pressed to accept of a fuller grace—still, the miracle of mercy is God’s forbearance—the suspension of his judgment—his passing by sins so many and so heinous—sins, too, aggravated by the rejection of the offered Saviour. So that, on the whole, we may understand this passage as discriminating the natures, rather than the dates, of these two dispensations; and as connecting both of them equally with the “setting forth of Christ,” as that which justifies God in both of these modes of dealing with men, and without which, he could neither exercise long-suffering, nor impart justification, except by a compromise of his righteousness, and a sacrifice of this essential attribute of his character and administration.

It may be right to add, that while we interpret the phrase, “the righteousness of God,” in these two verses, as meaning the attribute of righteousness in God, as the moral governor, lawgiver, and judge of the universe, chiefly because it is so explained in the following clause—“that he might be just;” we take it, in all other places in this Epistle, to denote the righteousness (not subjective, as regards God, but objective) which he has provided, and of which he has accepted, in the person and work of his own Son—that righteousness which is “unto all and upon all them that believe” (Rom. iii. 22); which, as a righteousness by faith, is revealed in order to faith (Rom. i. 17); and which is not afar off, but “nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” (Rom. x. 8, 9.)

NOTE C.—P. 5.

Gracious, as distinguished from judicial, forbearance—The death of infants.

It will be observed, here, that we speak of the dispensation of forbearance, as connected with the plan of saving mercy, and a system of means and influences fitted to lead men to God; without which, indeed, it could not properly be considered as forbearance at all. We altogether omit the question, how far God might not have had reasons for sparing man on the earth, irrespectively of the atonement, and although no such provision of grace had ever been contemplated. Thus, for the sake of illustration, we may venture to conceive of the alternative before the divine mind having been decided otherwise than he was freely pleased to decide it, in his eternal counsels of love; we may imagine that instead of a gracious purpose to save any, there had been a righteous and holy determination to leave all to perish; and still, even on such a supposition, the earth, cursed for man's sake, might have been spared; the final conflagration might have been delayed; and the race of sinners might have been suffered, or ordained, to increase and multiply, till the full number of the generations of Adam's children should be completed, and all in succession should individually and collectively give evidence of their participation in his guilt and corruption, by bringing forth, from the seed of original sin, the bitter fruit of actual transgressions, and so consummating their iniquity and ruin. This, indeed, may be regarded as but too probable a result, or rather as the inevitable issue of the arrangement we have dared to indicate. For it was not with fallen man as with the fallen angels. These last, headed perhaps by an individual leader—whom either they may have chosen, or God may have appointed, to represent them—completed their

apostasy at once. For they, too, may have been treated by God on that footing of representation which seems to characterize so generally his dealings with his creatures; in their case, also, it may have been a single offence, committed in their names by a single and selected surety, which tested their loyalty, and sealed their character and fate; and, all the parties on whose behalf the trial was made being already in existence, and capable of giving voluntary consent, the execution of the sweeping sentence may have been swift and summary. But in the case of man, had there been no remedy provided, we must believe that the whole progeny of Adam, whom, in his probation, he represented, must still have been brought into being; and there might seem reason also to conclude, on that supposition, that all would have been suffered, one after another, each individual for himself, to show what was in them; so that none would have been taken away in infancy, or before opportunity had been given them to manifest, by their own wicked works, their practical concurrence in the rebellion of their first father; and so to prove the reality and universality of the imputed guilt and transmitted taint of his original apostasy. If so, then the fact that any little children die, and still more, that so many die, taken along with what is revealed respecting their interest in the life-giving remedy of the gospel, as well as in the deadly disease of sin (Rom. v. 14, 15), must be viewed as one of the blessed fruits of Christ's interposition.

It is true that early death is usually deprecated in Scripture as a heavy calamity (Ps. cii. 24); and in particular, the death of a little child is represented as a sore stroke and heavy judgment to its parents—as in the instance of David. (2 Sam. xii. 14-23.) It is true, also, that in the glorious state of things described by Isaiah (ch. lxv. 17-25), the death of infants seems to be referred to as a special source of sorrow, as well as a peculiar token of sin, from

which that period is to be exempt. Nor, indeed, is it possible to conceive of any more affecting proof of the malignity and power of sin, than the sight of one who has never sinned after the similitude of Adam's sin, or ours—the newborn babe, guiltless of actual transgression—yet on account of sin, suffering, languishing, and expiring. The heart round which the tie of a new affection has begun to twine itself, cannot but be smitten to the dust when the bond is thus rudely and prematurely cut in twain; and recognising the melancholy ravages of the destroyer, where shall it find rest, but in a scene from which this sore disaster is excluded? But all this is quite consistent with the opinion that to die in infancy is a privilege procured by the death of Christ for those who are thus early carried away—that but for his interposition, all the children of Adam would have lived to heap the guilt of their own wilful iniquities, besides their inherited sin, upon their own heads—that it is a part of his purchase to have so many given to him to be regenerated and sanctified from the womb, and to be taken away from the evil to come.

This idea we here venture to throw out is one full of interest and consolation, and it seems to be warranted by the analogy of Scripture; but the present is not the occasion for enlarging upon it. Our object in this note is to explain that we do not connect the sparing of the earth, and of men upon the earth, in itself, necessarily with the death of Christ; since, even had there been no design of mediation at all, it might still have been necessary, for the ends of righteous judgment, that there should be time given for the whole race to increase and multiply, and sin, and perish. But that would not have been an exercise of long-suffering, or a dispensation of forbearance and patience, properly so called, any more than the partial respite or license given to Satan and his angels, before their being first bound, and then cast into the lake of fire, can be

viewed in that light. Evidently the apostle speaks of a dispensation of suspended judgment, with the accompanying benefit of a system of means fitted to work reconciliation, when he refers to the passing over of men's sins, through the forbearance of God, as connected with the setting forth of Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood.



NOTE D.—Page 16.

Saving faith founded on definite propositions, though not capable in its direct act, of being expressed in one.

It might seem unnecessary to guard myself against being supposed to mean, that since faith does not “consist in the belief of any definite proposition at all,” it must consist in the belief of one that is indefinite, were it not that such an interpretation has, strangely enough, been put on this sentence. I need hardly say that it is entirely erroneous. In so far as saving faith has to do with propositions at all, it is with such as are quite definite and precise—clear, exact, and categorical. That God is love—that he so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life—that Jesus is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him—these, and many other propositions with which faith is concerned, are not indefinite; if by indefinite we are to understand vague, equivocal, or uncertain, statements. But while these definite propositions constitute the *warrant* or *ground* of saving faith, and while the belief of them must lie at the foundation of any gracious act or exercise of soul, we cannot but think that saving faith implies in it something more than this belief. The truth is, this belief of these definite propositions, having its seat in the understanding, needs, as it were, to be quickened into warmth and activity, by touch and con-

tact with the more energetic principles of our nature; so that, first carrying the will, it becomes appropriating faith; meeting, next, the conscience, it becomes repentance; entering the heart, it becomes love; and impregnated with the principle of ambition or desire, it becomes high and heavenly hope. This, however, is not the place for discussing the nature of faith, which comes under our notice afterwards. But we are anxious to protest, on the one hand, against our being supposed to make saving faith rest on indefinite propositions; and, on the other, against our being required to express the act of faith itself in any definite formula, or, indeed, in any formula whatever.

In regard to this latter point, we think an instructive lesson may be learned from the perusal of two antagonist treatises—the one written by Dr Bellamy of New England, against Hervey and Marshall; the other by Dr John Anderson, in reply to Bellamy. Dr Bellamy's "Treatise on the Nature of True Religion" is a work of great value, especially as searching very deeply the foundations on which our knowledge of God and our obligation to love God, as well under the law as under the gospel, must rest. In his "Letters and Dialogues," also, in which he assails the doctrine taught by Hervey in his "Theron and Aspasio," and by Marshall on Santification, there are many important cautions, and much useful matter. At the same time, it is to be feared that, in his anxiety to convict the parties whom he assails of Antinomianism, he does injustice to them; and in his dread of all assurance but what might stand the test of self-examination, and an appeal to fruits, he does injustice to himself. In exposing the absurdity which he imagines his adversaries to hold respecting faith—as if it consisted in the mere belief that I am saved already—he seems to infringe upon that act of appropriation by which, on the warrant of the gospel invitation, I take Christ and his salvation to be mine now. It is on this point, accord-

ingly, that Dr Anderson dwells at length, and with remarkable clearness and power. Still, we cannot but think that, as is not uncommon, the disputants have exaggerated the difference between them.

The truth is, the chief difficulty in adjusting the matter at issue would seem to arise out of the attempt to translate into a precise formula, and embody in a definite proposition, what is implied in the act or exercise of saving faith. Hence such definitions of saving faith as the following, which give occasion for Dr Bellamy's strictures:—"It is a real persuasion in my heart that Jesus Christ is mine, and that I shall have life and salvation by him—that whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for me." "It is an hearty assurance that our sins are freely forgiven us in Christ;" and its language is, "Pardon is mine—grace is mine—Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine." Yet, if these expressions be weighed in connection with other views set forth by the same writers, they will be found, perhaps, to mean nothing more than that faith, in its very essence, is an appropriating act; and that, consequently, in its direct exercise, it involves a measure of "persuasion," or confidence, or "hearty assurance;" which, however, it would itself, if genuine, shrink from putting into the bold and naked form of an express and positive deliverance. Nor does this seem to be inconsistent with Bellamy's own opinion; for he freely uses such scriptural phraseology as "coming to Christ, receiving Christ, trusting in Christ, believing on Christ, flying to Christ," &c.; which he considers as descriptive, not of any act subsequent to faith, but of faith itself. Now, any exercise of mind such as will suit that phraseology, must surely have in it a measure of directly appropriating assurance, which, if it is to be articulately interpreted at all, must have some voice given to it, very similar to the utterance which Dr Bellamy condemns.

But this is the very evil to be complained of—that men should either attempt, or be required, to fix down, in written or spoken words, an affection or movement of the mind, as yet unable to realize itself. For all language is reflex; whereas faith is direct. It is directly that I believe, and believing, take Christ as mine; it is reflexly that I say that I believe, or that Christ is mine. Thus it is with other mental operations. I love; but my loving is not my saying, or thinking that I love. I take an offered friendship to be my own; but my so taking it and using it is different from my saying, or thinking that it is mine. It is the imperfection of language, after all, that causes any fallacy here. Language cannot catch a direct act of the mind, without instantly making it reflex. The moment I put my faith or feeling into words, it is as if I looked into a mirror, or sat to a painter, to have, not the primary attitude of my soul, but an image of it, presented to my own view, and to the world's. The mistake of the class of divines whom Bellamy criticises somewhat sharply, would seem to lie in their vainly endeavouring to make language do the office of that magic art which would arrest and stereotype the almost unconscious glance of the eager eye; or, in plainer terms, to reduce into a formula that direct exercise of simple trust, which cannot thus recognise its own reality, without instantly and altogether ceasing to be direct and becoming reflex and inferential. And Bellamy's error, in so far as he erred, consisted in his making no allowance for this source of misunderstanding, and in his pressing, consequently, too far, his *reductio ad absurdum*, or the running up of his antagonists into a corner. Two brief quotations from Dr Anderson's work will illustrate our meaning.

The first has reference to a passage in Hervey, and is as follows:—

“Before we conclude this letter, it may be proper to take

notice of Mr Bellamy's remarks on some passages of the 16th Dialogue of Mr Hervey's 'Theron and Aspasio.'

"Mr Hervey observes, that 'this appropriating persuasion is comprehended in all the figurative descriptions of faith which occur in Holy Writ. Faith is styled a looking unto Jesus. But if we do not look unto Jesus as the propitiation for our sins, what comfort or what benefit can we derive from the sight? When the Israelites looked unto the brazen serpent, they certainly regarded it as a remedy, each particular person for himself. Faith is styled a resting upon Christ, or a receiving of him. But when I rest upon an object, I use it as my support. When I receive a gift, I take it as my own property. Faith is a casting ourselves upon Christ. This may receive some elucidation from an incident recorded in the Acts. When those who sailed with Paul saw their vessel shattered—saw the waves prevailing—saw no hope of safety from continuing in the ship, they cast themselves upon the floating planks. They cast themselves upon the planks without any scruple; not questioning their right to make use of them; and they clave to these supporters with a cheerful confidence; not doubting that, according to the apostle's promise, they should escape safe to land. So we are to cast ourselves upon the Lord Jesus Christ, without indulging a doubt concerning our right to make use of him, or the impossibility of his failing us. Faith is characterized by eating the bread of life. And can this be done without a personal application? Faith is expressed by putting on Christ as a commodious and beautiful garment. And can any idea or any expression more strongly denote an actual appropriation?'

"The unprejudiced will allow these observations to be much to Mr Hervey's purpose; that is, they clearly prove that there is, in the nature of saving faith, an application of Christ to ourselves in particular.

“And what does Mr Bellamy reply? ‘Why,’ says he, ‘Christ is to be acknowledged, received, and honoured, according to his character, as the promised Messiah. Is he compared to the brazen serpent? We are not to believe that we are healed; but to look to him for healing. Is he compared to a city of refuge? We are not to believe ourselves safe; but to fly to him for safety. Is he compared to bread and water? We are not to believe that our hunger and thirst are assuaged; but to eat the living bread, and to drink the living water, that they may be so.’

“In this reply we observe, first, that Mr Bellamy misrepresents the sentiments of his opponents. For they are so far from saying that faith is a belief that we are healed, or that we are already in a safe state, or that our hunger and thirst are assuaged, that they will not allow that faith, properly speaking, believes anything concerning the state we are already in, excepting that we are miserable sinners of Adam’s family to whom the gospel is preached. And while they tell sinners that the gospel is directed to them, in such a manner as to warrant their immediate reception of Christ as therein exhibited, they at the same time declare that the gospel, without that reception of Christ, will be unprofitable to them. In the next place, it is to be observed, that, in Mr Bellamy’s remark, there is no notice taken of Mr Hervey’s argument; the force of which lies in two things. One is, that it is only true and saving faith which is meant by these metaphorical expressions. The other thing is, that each of them includes the notion of a person’s application of something to his own use, or for the benefit of himself in particular. If these two things hold true (and Mr Bellamy says nothing against either of them), it will necessarily follow, that there is such an application of Christ to ourselves in the nature of saving faith.”

In further explanation, we must refer to the close of this letter of Dr Anderson's:—

“We conclude this letter with a caution, which may be of use to remove a common prejudice against our doctrine concerning the nature of saving faith. When we say that a real persuasion that Christ is mine, and that I shall have eternal salvation through his name, belongs to the essence of faith, it is not meant that a person never acts faith, but when he is sensible of such a persuasion. There are various degrees of faith; and its language is sometimes more, sometimes less, distinct and explicit. The confidence of faith is, in many, like a grain of mustard seed, or like a spark of heavenly fire amidst the troubled sea of all manner of corruptions and temptations; which, were not this faith secretly supported by the power of God, according to his promise, would soon extinguish it. Hence this real persuasion may be rooted in many a heart, in which for a time it cannot be distinctly discerned; yet it in some measure discovers itself by secret wrestling against unbelief, slavish fear, and all other corruptions.”

The other passage is one in which Dr Anderson answers a query of Bellamy; and it is fitted still more clearly to show their difference and agreement:—

“‘*Query* 1. Did God ever require any of the sons of Adam to believe any proposition to be true, unless it was in fact true before he believed? We are required to believe that there is a God—that Christ is the Son of God—that he died for sinners—that he that believeth shall be saved—that he that believeth not shall be damned—that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. We are required to believe all the truths taught in the Bible. But they are all true before we believe them, and whether we believe them or not.’

“*Answer.* The occasion of this query is the following

words in the explication of the tenth direction in Mr Marshall's 'Gospel-Mystery of Sanctification:—' 'The reason,' says he 'why we are to assure ourselves in our faith, that God freely giveth Christ and salvation to us particularly, is not because it is a truth before we believe it, but because it becometh a certain truth when we believe it, and because it will never be true, except we do in some measure persuade and assure ourselves that it is so.' In opposition to this passage, Mr Bellamy asserts, 'that God never requires us to believe anything but what is true before we believe it, and whether we believe it or not.' And it is granted to Mr Bellamy, that God never requires us to believe any speculative proposition, such as those recited in the query; or any absolute prediction or historical fact, but what is true, whether we believe it or not. But saving faith, as it is distinguished from other sorts of faith, is not merely a belief of such speculative truths; because there is no such truth but what may be known and assented to by wicked men and devils. When the apostle James says, *Even the devils believe and tremble*, he undoubtedly admits, that they may assent to all the truths or propositions contained in the Scriptures. In this sense, it has been justly said, *that true justifying faith is not simply the believing of any sentence that is written or can be thought upon*. So the persuasion, *that Christ is mine*, which we consider as belonging to the nature of saving faith, is not, properly speaking, a belief of this proposition, *That Christ is mine*, as if it were formally, or, in so many words contained in Scripture; but it is the necessary import of that receiving or taking of Christ to myself, which is answerable to, and warranted by, the free grant of him in the gospel, directed to sinners of mankind indefinitely. In this believing, however, *that Christ is my own Saviour*, I am no more chargeable with believing a lie than I am in believing that, when a friend gives me a book, or any other valuable

article, I have a right, by virtue of his gift, to consider it, to take and use it, as my own; though it be certain, that, if I finally despise and reject his gift, it neither is, nor ever will be mine. Further: if the gospel be considered as a free promise of Christ and his benefits; then this persuasion, *that Christ is mine*, is undoubtedly the import of my faith or belief of that promise as directed to me. And yet, though this promise be directed to all the hearers of the Word, none of them, in the event, will find Christ to be theirs, excepting those that believe; because faith is the only way or mean by which God hath appointed them to attain a saving interest in, or the actual possession of, what he hath promised in the gospel. Hence the apostle warns those to whom this promise is left of the danger of coming short of it. Heb. iv. 1. It may be useful to add the words of some ministers of the gospel on this subject. ‘There is a full warrant,’ say they, ‘to believe, or general right of access to Christ by faith, which all the hearers of the gospel have before they believe, and whether ever they believe or not; and, in this respect, the provision of the new covenant is *their own mercy*; which warrant, or right, faith believes and improves. Yet faith is not a mere believing of an interest which the person had before; but it is also a believing of a new interest in Christ and his blood; or a persuasion, by which a person appropriates to himself what lies in common upon the field of the gospel. All the privileges and blessings of the new covenant are generally and indefinitely set forth by the gospel, upon this very design: That each person who hears it may take it all to himself, in the way of believing; as there cannot otherwise be any proper entertainment given to the gospel. An indefinite declaration is made of God’s name, as **THE LORD OUR GOD**, and of Christ’s name, as **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**; and all covenant blessings are presented to us in absolute promises; all which is certainly

for being believed. But every person is to believe for himself, not for another. It is a mock faith, if a person believes only that some *others* have a saving interest in God, and Christ, and the promises; as he hath no business about making this particular application to others. So that he is still a rejecter of the whole, if he do not believe with an appropriation of the whole to himself; whilst the revelation of grace is made to him for this purpose, or for none at all.'

“ ‘Such is the wonderful power and privilege which God bestows on true faith, that he makes all to be personally and savingly a man’s own; just as the man is taking all to himself, and making all his own, by an appropriating persuasion of faith.’ ”

We cannot close this note, without referring to the late Dr M’Crie’s correspondence with Dr Watson, as we are tantalized, rather than satisfied, with a brief specimen of it given in his life (p. 323–337), and venturing to ask if the whole is never to be made public? In such a publication we trust Dr Watson will give his concurrence and aid, that his own letters on the subject may be embraced in it. While on this topic, we cannot help referring also to the recent republication of a tract on faith, by the late Dr Stewart of the Canongate, and suggesting that his able biographer might confer a favour on the Church by taking up the subject.

NOTE E.—Page 28.

The Wesleyans—English and Scottish Theology.

This reference to a body of Christians, whom to disparage were to question the seal of God himself—for no society

has been more evidently owned as a branch of the true Church than the community of Wesleyan Methodists—was made, at the time, with the utmost respect, and simply for the sake of illustration. I would deeply regret it, if I supposed it to be fairly capable of a construction that might seem invidious or unkind. The truth is, in discussing this subject, one is anxious to keep an open door for the mutual recognition of one another's Christianity, between parties that seem to differ; and especially, to make allowance for the different points of view from which they may have been led, by circumstances, to contemplate it. We can afford to smile at the bitter hatred of Calvinism which breathes through the writings of John Wesley and his friends, when we perceive the caricature of that system which they set up to be attacked; and still more, when we take into account their thorough recognition of the sovereignty of divine grace, in the work of regeneration and conversion. With the high doctrine which they hold respecting the work of the Spirit, it becomes rather an inconsistency, than a heresy, with them, that they put a more lax interpretation on the extent of the work of the Son. On the other hand, any departure from the strict view of the extent of the atonement, among us, is to be most anxiously dreaded and deprecated; because it almost uniformly indicates a lurking tendency to call in question the sovereignty of divine grace altogether; and it is invariably found, in our Churches, to open a door for the influx of a tide of Pelagian, as well as Arminian, error.

It would be an interesting subject of historical and theological inquiry, to investigate the cause of a distinction which, we think, may be traced throughout, between the practical divinity of England, and that of Scotland, at least since the days of the Covenant and Puritan contests. In England, Calvinism has much more frequently lapsed into Antinomianism than in Scotland; whereas in Scotland,

Arminianism has always run more immediately into Pelagianism than in England; for these are evidently the opposite tendencies of the two systems—Calvinism inclining towards Antinomian fatalism, and Arminianism towards Pelagian self-righteousness or self-conversion. Now in Scotland, a Calvinist is rarely Antinomian, while an Arminian has almost always a leaning towards Pelagianism; whereas in England, a hard, cold, and indolent orthodoxy, was found to take the place of living piety, among too many of the successors of the Calvinistic and Nonconformist divines—until the philosophical necessity of the Socinian Priestly almost came to be held as the legitimate representation of the Predestinarian theology; and, on the other hand, an Arminian notion of the extent of the atonement has sprung up, in connection with a strictly Calvinistic view of the new birth, under a free and fervid preaching of the gospel of the grace of God. The national difference, in point of intellectual talent and moral temperament, may go far to explain the fact to which we have referred—the different histories of the two countries, still further—but that it is, substantially, a fact correctly stated, can scarcely be questioned; and if so, it is one deserving of elaborate inquiry, especially in present circumstances, on the eve, as we cannot doubt, of events that must stir the public mind, on matters of religion—and on the very matters which occupied the minds of our fathers, ranging between high Arminian Prelacy on the one hand, and the extreme of lawless speculation on the other—as it has never been stirred since the days of the Commonwealth. Without entering on this tempting theme, we may content ourselves with observing that a departure from Calvinism, in Scotland, has almost uniformly been the index, whether as cause or as effect, of a decline of vital godliness, and the introduction of the broadest Pelagianism, in the assertion of a general power in man's will to believe, as well as a

general purpose in God's will to save; whereas, in England, at least hitherto, it has been often found, that, starting from practically Antinomian orthodoxy, or mere Pelagian formality, evangelical and living religion has taken a form that bears somewhat of the Arminian character.

At the same time, the present is an era in which the Lord is trying every man's work; and we have no idea that the position which even the most evangelical Arminians take up, is one that will stand the test. On the contrary, we anticipate either a more thorough searching of the depths of theology with a view to a surer foundation being laid, by all who hold the doctrine of the divine sovereignty; or otherwise, a scattering of the ranks even of the godly, and a springing up of multitudinous sects and shades of party and of opinion, such as gave a victory to the ungodly in the last strife of thought that convulsed our country. A disaster like this God may avert; or he may remedy the evil, after years of licentiousness and persecution; but if it were possible for men of God to meet, confer, and be of one mind beforehand, it were well.



NOTE F.—P. 45.

The Inexplicable Difficulty—Where it should be placed.

It is most essential to a right apprehension of the Calvinistic system, to bear in mind that it does not profess to solve the great difficulty in the relation of God's will to man's, but only to adjust the position of that difficulty aright, so that it shall not interfere, either with the sovereignty of divine grace from first to last, on the one hand, or with the responsibility and dependence of man, on the other. In this respect, the doctrine which has been so

much vilified as presumptuous and sophistical, may fairly challenge, more than any other, the praise of humility and honesty. Other theories undertake to explain and vindicate the divine administration, to the satisfaction of human reason—with what success, let the tendency from one expedient to another, in the attempt to get rid of mystery, show. This, alone, frankly owns the impossibility of making all plain: and takes its appeal to the undoubted supremacy and almighty power of God, as the only answer, in the last resort, to cavilling questions; and all the service it pretends to render is, that it assigns to the inexplicable knot its right position. What it chiefly contends for is, that this knot shall not come in between the counsels of the Godhead and the salvation of believers, so as to occasion any discrepancy, in passing from the purpose of redemption to its purchase, or from its purchase to its application.

NOTE G.—P. 74.

The Reserve of Scripture on the subject of the Nature of Faith.

The remarks made in a preceding note (D) may be considered as applicable here; especially those which relate to the difference between a direct and a reflex act of the mind, and the imperfection of language as the vehicle or instrument of these two acts respectively. The chief embarrassment, indeed, on this question as to the nature of faith, would seem to arise from this cause. It is remarkable, accordingly, that Scripture says very little, if anything, on the subject. The object of faith is set forth—Christ, in all the glory of his mediatorial person, the fulness of his mediatorial work, and the freeness of his mediatorial

ministry of reconciliation; the motives to faith are urged; the warrants of faith are spread out; the blessed fruits of faith, in the peace and joy of a believing soul, are traced; as well as its holy issues and evidences, in a life of new obedience. But as to the nature of the act itself, there is no analysis in Scripture that seeks to reach it. It is assumed that men know what believing or trusting means. That a more rigid and subtle scrutiny has been rendered necessary by the accumulation of errors on every side, may be admitted. At the same time, we may be allowed to regret that such a necessity should have arisen; and we cannot but fear that it may have led some to carry the process too far. Thus, on the one hand, the enumeration of so many different kinds of faith as some divines have been wont to distinguish—such as historical faith, the faith of miracles, temporary faith, saving faith, &c.—has undoubtedly tended to perplex; while, on the other hand, the attempt to simplify the whole matter, by reducing all to one, has, perhaps, created that very appearance of over-refinement which it was meant to remedy.

For, after all, the belief of a statement which is abstractly or independently true, whether I believe it or not, is a different thing from the belief of a statement which becomes true through some process of conviction, or concurrence, or consent, on my part; and it is different, also, from the process itself on which the truth of a statement of this latter kind turns. There is thus a sort of *tertium quid*, an intermediate something, between the belief of the one kind of statement and that of the other, which it seems vain to attempt to reduce into the form of a categorical proposition. That Christ is the Son of God and Saviour of sinners, is a clear announcement; that he is my Saviour is a clear announcement also. But the former is true, as a matter of fact, whether I believe or not; the latter becomes true, as a matter of fact,

only upon my believing. Does not this seem to prove that my believing, standing as it does between the two announcements, and forming the stepping-stone from the former announcement to the latter, is different from the belief of either the one or the other? But no categorical proposition can possibly be framed between these two: He saveth sinners; and, He saveth me. Must not that faith, therefore, of which we are in search, be an act or exercise of the mind, such as cannot be expressed in any formula of the naked intellect? For the intellect cannot turn the contingent (which alone comes between the two propositions) into the categorical—which really is the present problem; there must, therefore, be some other function—call it trust, or confidence, or persuasion, or assurance, or consent, or what you will—to translate, He saveth sinners who believe, into, He saveth me.

NOTE H.—P. 87.

The Sufferings of Christ—Their Amount and Character.

Let it be observed, that we do not here speak either of the precise nature, or of the amount, of the sufferings which Christ endured, but only of the character in which he endured them, whatever they were; and the character, consequently, which is to be assigned and ascribed to them. It was in the character of one made under the law, and made sin for us, that he endured these sufferings; and therefore, they were, in the strict sense, penal and retributive; and as borne by one, the divinity of whose person, and the merit of whose obedience, imparted an infinite value to his offering of himself, they exhausted the full penal and retributive sentence lying upon the guilty sin-

ners whose place he took. As to the exact nature of these sufferings, beyond what is revealed respecting his bodily anguish and mental agony, it would be presumptuous to inquire; it was a good form that was employed in the old litanies: "By thine unknown sufferings, good Lord deliver us." The sweat in the garden—the cry on the cross—speak volumes. Nor, as to the amount of these sufferings, do we at all incline to the idea of the striking of a balance, or the settling of an exact proportion or account, between the number of sins to be expiated, or of sinners to be redeemed, and the stripes inflicted on the surety; as if his sufferings, weighed and measured to the value of each sigh and each drop of blood, were exactly adequate to the guilt of the transgressions of his people—neither more nor less: so that, if fewer sins, or sinners, had been concerned, his pain would have been less; while, if it had been the will of God to save more, he must have had additional pangs to bear. Any such calculation is to be utterly repudiated, as dishonouring to God, and savouring of a carnal mind. So far as we can judge, such is the heinousness of sin, and the inflexibility of the righteous and holy law of God, that had there been but one individual sinner, for whom atonement was to be made, it would still have been as necessary as now that the eternal Son of God should become incarnate, and assume that individual's nature, and take his place under the law, and under the curse of the law; for even then, nothing short of the Surety's perfect obedience in his stead could have justified that one transgressor, and nothing short of his endurance of the cross, with all its woe, could have procured remission of his sins. And so, on the other hand, such is the Surety appointed by the Father, and such the merit of his voluntary obedience and propitiatory sufferings and death, that had the number of those whom he represented been increased a hundredfold, it does not appear that it would have been needful for him to do more,

or to endure more, than he has actually done and endured for his elect. The real question is, Did he obey and did he suffer, in a representative character? and if so, Whom did he represent? Was he under the law? In fulfilling all righteousness, did he meet the positive demands of the law which his people had failed to meet? In enduring all his sufferings and submitting to the cross, did he receive the punishment due to his people? Was his righteousness a legal righteousness, and were his sufferings penal sufferings? If not, the atonement has no meaning at all. It is a mere *coup de theatre*, a *spectacle*, or exhibition, to amaze men; or a *coup d'etat*, to convey an impression of God's greatness; it has no reality as a satisfaction to God's justice; nor can it ever come home, as a personal transaction, to me.

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